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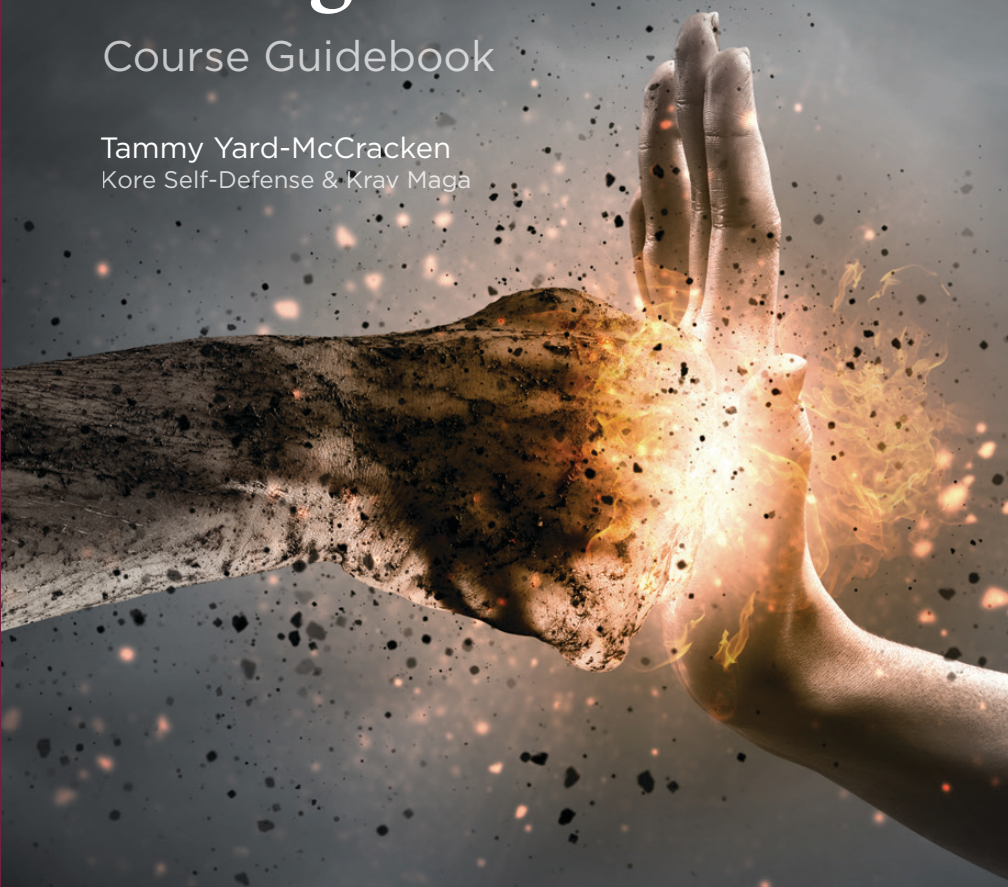
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Better Living

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Understanding and Applying Self-Defense Strategies

Course Guidebook

Tammy Yard-McCracken
Kore Self-Defense & Krav Maga



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Dr. Yard-McCracken's academic background includes a bachelor of science in Education from Illinois State University, a master of science in Professional Counseling (LPC) from the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and a doctorate in Psychology (PsyD) from the Eisner Institute for Professional Studies, where she wrote her dissertation on using mindfulness training to improve situational awareness for frontline operatives. She has been established as an expert witness in Virginia and Texas civil and criminal proceedings and has served as a professional consultant to legal counsel on issues of human behavior and violence. Dr. Yard-McCracken has also served as an adjunct faculty member for Argosy University and Houston Community College, and she has authored numerous articles on conflict management, instructor development, and gender issues in self-defense.

In addition to having more than 25 years as a practicing psychotherapist, Dr. Yard-McCracken is a certified conflict communication instructor and is credentialed as a self-defense instructor with Chiron Training. She is also a board member for Conflict Research Group International and a core instructor with Violence Dynamics, which teaches seminars on various aspects of violence prevention, self-defense, and conflict communication. Her training programs have been sought out by safety and security professionals, members of law enforcement, first responders, and national security professionals.

Dr. Yard-McCracken has also provided training and instruction for private companies, international safety and security organizations, and nonprofit groups serving populations at high risk for violence. She has been a requested speaker for organizations such as the Air Line Pilots Association and Women in Federal Law Enforcement. Dr. Yard-McCracken also serves as a violence dynamics subject matter expert for a Washington DC–area tactical training organization, coauthoring and instructing a range of courses, including Active Shooter Response Training.

Dr. Yard-McCracken is a guest instructor for the Great Course *Martial Arts for Your Mind and Body*. ■



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DISCLAIMER

This series of lessons is intended to convey general information regarding self-defense issues and strategies and is for educational purposes only. The lessons include demonstrations in the field of self-defense performed by experienced professionals. Please consult your physician or other health-care professional before attempting any activity depicted in this course to make sure it is appropriate for your health, fitness, capabilities, and needs.

This course contains strong language, physical conflict, and graphic violence. It is designed for adults and is not recommended for children without the guidance and approval of a parent. The Teaching Company expressly disclaims any responsibility for any misuse of information to cause harm to another person and disclaims any warranty that the information contained in these lessons will ensure individuals can engage in self-defense to avoid harm to themselves. While there are references to legal implications in these lessons, the instructor is not an attorney and does not provide legal advice. These lessons are not a substitute for, nor do they replace, professional advice from legal professionals.

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UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING **SELF-DEFENSE STRATEGIES**

This course offers adults* a full introduction to self-defense—a course in learning how to understand violence and how to carry out decisions necessary to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. While self-defense is often defined as the use of physical force to counter an immediate threat of violence, this course will address a much broader spectrum of strategies for effective self-defense.

The course begins with the foundations of moving and managing human bodies. Discovering principles such as structure, targeting, and power generation, you will explore physical skills for countering an ambush-type attack as well as lower levels of physical threat. Addressing the physical aspect of self-defense through a principle-based model, the course will teach you about the immense adaptability that is available in your natural survival instincts and how to quickly access your intuitive skills through one of the most powerful learning methods: play.

However, those who focus only on physical training—whether with a weapon, in a martial art, or even in a self-defense class—are preparing only for the physical fight, whose consequences can be physically, emotionally, or legally devastating, even if you do “win” the immediate conflict.

That’s why the middle third of the course increasingly delves into early-intervention strategies, giving you a tool kit for prevention, avoidance, and de-escalation—any of which offers a best-possible outcome.

This is also why the course explores the dynamics of conflict and violence, both social and asocial. You will get an introduction to the common patterns and “scripts” used in social conflict and discover how social conflict escalates toward violence. The course will compare these social scripts to the strategies employed in asocial violence, demonstrating how the tactics for managing and de-escalating social conflict can actually make an asocial predator situation worse.

You will gain insight into the elements present in every potentially violent encounter: you, the threat (the person who intends you harm), the environment, and luck. You will have opportunities to explore how your beliefs may help or hinder during the high-speed decision making required in self-defense. You will explore the decision matrix through which a threat chooses a specific target and learn how to assess the victim profiles you might match as well as how to improve your standing as a high-risk/low-reward target.

The final third of the course will first turn to important, but often overlooked, issues of ethical articulation, practicing how to describe what happened in a violent encounter using clean behavioral language and becoming more aware of mental glitches that may undercut your ability to defend yourself. Then, the course will survey the empowering, but sometimes upsetting, realm of the many physical “cheats” during a violent encounter, followed by a deeper dive into specific cheats that take advantage of joint locks.

Next, the course turns to some of the most challenging physical aspects of self-defense, learning how to manage falls, how to get back up under a threat, and how to handle attacks that escalate into situations on the ground—applicable to circumstances for both men and women.

Weapons training presents even more severe limitations, given the necessary time, space, and decision tree required to appropriately use potentially lethal force. You will be introduced to various weapons and established techniques for defending against a threat presenting a weapon for intimidation purposes, with guidelines for finding a qualified instructor if you choose to train in this demanding skill set.

The final two lessons of the course consider how to prepare for a self-defense situation involving the most significant people in your life and how to apply the physical and mental skills from across the course in real-world environments, experimenting with the human animal's ability to adapt.

Whether working in a play-based or principle-based mode, you will have opportunities to practice skills pulled from a variety of experientially tested training approaches, including Krav Maga and grappling arts. You will learn how to defend against punches and grabs, play with methods for reducing the impact of a mental “freeze,” and apply the more technical elements to the organic and unpredictable nature of evolving violent encounters. You will be guided in how to effectively practice the skills on your own and how to practice safely with a partner.

Finally, you will discover how basic knowledge of self-defense strategies has the potential to create value in a much broader context of life—opening up how you see yourself, others, and the world.

“This course is designed for adults and is not recommended for children without the guidance of a parent. Understanding self-defense involves understanding the realities of conflict and violence between human beings, which ranges from strong language to physical assault and murderous intent. If you are considering this course for a child under the age of 18, it is recommended that you review the material yourself before viewing it with a minor. ■

WAKING UP YOUR NATURAL HUMAN ANIMAL

LESSON 1

In this course on self-defense, you will learn how to understand violence and how to carry out decisions necessary to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. There is almost always a degree of mythos and mystery coloring expectations when it comes to self-defense training. As a result, people approach training with an internal dialogue already running in the background. Sometimes that dialogue is based on worry or fear; sometimes it's about confronting and resolving past experiences. If you are unsure of whether you can learn to be effective in a bad situation, know that you already have this ability and that this course is just going to wake up the natural human animal inside you.

THE BEST SELF-DEFENSE SKILL: AVOIDANCE

- ⦿ A tiger cub has the programming to hunt for its supper, and in a way, so do you. No one has to teach you that being the prey is a less-than-ideal circumstance because like the tiger, you are a predator. Deep down in your DNA, you know that being the prey is the vulnerable position.
- ⦿ And the fact that we humans are predators can be an uncomfortable bit of reality. It sounds dark and wrong—and a violation of what it means to be a good person—but if we are going to be really honest, we are more than predators. We are apex-level predators; we sit at the top of the food chain. And it's strange how we got there.
- ⦿ Like other predatory species, we have eyes on the front of our heads and we can move in the cross-crawl pattern of a wildcat stalking an antelope. What we're lacking, though, are the strong jaws needed for gripping and tearing at our kill. Our eyes aren't that keen, and by comparison, our hearing is kind of terrible. We aren't very fast or strong, and when it's cold, we need artificial fur to keep ourselves warm.

- ◉ We earned our status as apex predators because we have opposable thumbs and the ability to think in abstractions. We can think creatively, extrapolate, and use correlations to create predictions. Sometimes you do those apex predator things consciously, but you do them unconsciously all the time.
- ◉ It's this ability that makes you, as a human being, able to develop the best-possible self-defense skill we know of: avoidance. The highest-order win is the self-defense situation no one ever hears about because it never happens. It's a nonevent.



This lesson includes a warm-up, also called a system check, that involves moving through your body and discovering your strengths and weaknesses in mobility and flexibility.

Pain signals many things, including potential for injury, so listen to your body. Waking up your ability to hear what your body is telling you is part of rehabilitating your human animal.

- ⦿ Something nudges at your subconscious, the hair on the back of your neck raises, and for some reason you walk past the elevators instead of taking the first one down at the end of the day. You'll never know what you missed. You'll never know what didn't happen. And that's the win. But it's not a satisfying one, is it?
- ⦿ How do you train for a nonevent? You can look at this as rehab—rehabilitating your human animal. Avoidance is the highest order in self-defense, and playing on Benjamin Disraeli's quote from *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, we hope for the best but train for the worst. And when the worst situation is on us, we want a response that will check as many boxes as possible, as quickly as possible.
- ⦿ When faced with a threat, your goals are to improve your position, make the threat's position worse, limit the damage you take, and cause as much damage as necessary. This is referred to as the golden move.
- ⦿ Golden moves are things that you find or moments of opportunity you create by managing the circumstances as they unfold. Finding golden moves—or a lesser counterpart, where you may not actually get all four moves in one smooth action but rather pull off maybe two or three—gets easier the more realistic you are about violence, the more consciously practiced you are at reading human behavior, and the more comfortable you are with moving your body.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

- ⦿ Humans learn best through play. You were born to learn by playing. Just like a litter of kittens learn to hunt by pouncing on each other, we learn our survival skills by playing as well.
- ⦿ While it's true that we can improve on specific skills through conscious training, or practice, if we can't bring it back into the adaptability that play gives us, then we'll have a harder time adapting to the rapidly changing reality of a potentially violent encounter.

The exercises in these lessons sometimes end with the phrase "make safe," which means stop what you're doing—safely.

Sometimes people get into self-defense training to bolster their martial arts ego. If you have a martial arts background or prior self-defense training, the training in this course may or may not look familiar. When what is done in the lessons in this course is different than your training, know that the goal isn't to change what you have already learned; it's about taking what you know and applying it to a self-defense mind-set.



- ⦿ Play teaches us to adapt, and without it as part of our training, we risk worshipping two dangerously false gods: Always and Never. Humans like guarantees, but in self-defense, there are no guarantees. You only get to solve the problem you have in front of you, not the problem you wish you had. And the confidence to trust your high-speed decision making can be found in the deep learning that happens when we play around with changing dynamics.
- ⦿ We're not only playing with your body; we're also going to play around with other bodies. When your body has to deal with another body, it's a meat puzzle. Your goal is to solve that meat puzzle. If you have a basic understanding of the principles around how bodies move, then this high-speed decision making and adaptability becomes intuitive—because it is. Or it was when you were a kid.
- ⦿ The first principle for moving bodies is structure. Bone is stronger than muscle, and when you can line up the bone-to-bone connections from your base up through where you need power, you gain a massive advantage by letting your bones work for you.
- ⦿ The more you understand structure, the more you can use it to your advantage in all kinds of ways. You can not only use it to improve your position by maintaining distance from the threat but also to make the threat's position worse.
- ⦿ When you can use structure to save effort and energy or to give you more power and strength, do it. If there is a big difference in size and weight between you and the threat, understanding how to use structure to your advantage is huge.
- ⦿ But every gift has its downside. Muscles, ligaments, and tendons are pretty elastic, whereas bones are not. Bones don't stretch; they break.

Your job is to engage this course from a place of discovery and exploration as it applies to you, your life, your body, and your circumstances.

Whether you're in peak athletic condition or your joints talk to you every time you move, this is the body you will have to defend yourself in. Get to know it, wake it up, and get it moving. One way to do this is to incorporate the warm-up and primal movements from this lesson into your morning routine.

This body you live in is the only one you have. Protecting it is both your responsibility and your right.

Resources

Miller, *Meditations on Violence*.

———, *Principle-Based Instruction for Self-Defense (And Maybe Life)*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Knowing how your body works is important to self-defense, and the warm-up in this lesson addresses mobility. When you did the warm-up, what did you notice about where you're tight or uncomfortable?
- 2 What are your expectations for self-defense training? What are your concerns?
- 3 If you have any prior training in martial arts, self-defense, or personal protection, how is the self-defense taught in this lesson familiar? If nothing was familiar, what stuck out the most?

OTHER BODIES AS “MEAT PUZZLES”

LESSON 2

There is a unique value you will gain from this course if you have a partner to play with in this journey. Violence doesn't happen in a vacuum, so you shouldn't be learning self-defense skills in a vacuum.

There's a level of physical feedback we need to integrate the experience into our bodies. We are solving meat puzzles, so you need a body—a meat puzzle—to play with. You're still going to gain value if you don't have a partner, but the deeper gain will come from playing with another human, so grab someone to play with you every chance you get.

This lesson begins with a warm-up, or system check—a shorter version of the one in lesson 1.

THE ONE-STEP GAME

- ⦿ Rory Miller created a training game or drill called one-step as a way to offset the safety-related training flaws that are built into most martial arts and combat sports. There are many variations and applications of one-step, but all of the permutations build off of the same foundation.
- ⦿ Because we are practicing violent encounters, if there isn't some sort of deliberate training flaw, everyone would be hospitalized at the end of a training session. This is not an ideal way to learn the skills designed to keep you safe.
- ⦿ Traditional training models create safety by imbedding mistakes, or flaws.
 - One example is timing: So that you can learn the defense, your partner punches you slowly but you get to defend quickly. The timing of the punch and response is off. This slow-to-fast action as the threat isn't realistic; it's a flaw, so that while you are learning the defensive response, your partner is not repeatedly hurting you.

- Another flaw that students will use is to dial back their power generation. If you work at even 50 percent of your potential power, there's a good chance that someone is going to get hurt or injured.
 - You will also see people working from the wrong range. By moving farther away from your partner, you don't have to cheat speed or power, and no one gets hurt.
 - The last training flaw that supports safety is speed. If you go slowly enough, you have good range and timing. You're not pulling your contact away from your partner, and you don't have to cheat your power generation. Your partner is not moving for you by being nice; he or she is moving because your speed gives him or her time to let his or her body respond while avoiding injury.
- ◉ With the one-step game, the only one of these four flaws that we integrate into the drill is speed, which is the one mistake we make on purpose—for safety—that has the least chance of showing up in your actions during a violent encounter as an ingrained habit. And in the one-step game, each person gets one move.
- ◉ Your goals in one-step drills are to learn to see, to have fun and explore, to see the human body as a meat puzzle, and to solve the puzzle.



STRUCTURE: STRONG VERSUS WEAK LINES

- ⦿ Because bone is stronger than muscle, if you can line up the bone-to-bone connection from your base all the way up through where you want your power to land, you are using structure to your benefit. Alternatively, understanding how those bones connect, you can break up that structural integrity in the threat. The abridged version of this is to say that you are “using structure” or “breaking structure.”
- ⦿ When your structure is aligned well, there will be a strong line and a weak line to that position—meaning that there is a trajectory into your body that you can meet with strength and stability and another trajectory that you can’t. This is important because knowing where you are easily off-balanced allows you to adjust, quickly, when you feel that balance disintegrating.
- ⦿ When you fall out of balance, your center of gravity has moved far enough away from your base—the imaginary box around the position of your feet—that you can no longer easily adjust. And because each body is a little different, the location of one’s center of gravity varies from person to person.



One way to create a stronger, more flexible base is to split your feet and make sure that they are at least shoulder-width apart.

- ⊙ A strong line is the position where your center of gravity is most anchored over a stable base and you are able to maintain balance; the weak lines are weak because there is a shorter distance between where your center of gravity is over your base and where it isn't. The void is where structure is completely absent.
- ⊙ If the energy coming at you is anticipated, you can adjust by counterbalancing. The element of surprise becomes both a detriment and an advantage, depending on which side of it you're on. If your partner wants to disrupt your structure and you see it coming, you'll adjust and your partner's efforts will have little impact. If your partner's actions surprise you, it'll be harder for you to compensate, improving the possibility that your partner's actions are effective. And if you surprise your partner, then you'll have that same advantage.
- ⊙ The more you play with strong and weak lines, the easier it will be to spot them in someone else. This goes into a category of fighting smarter not harder: Where you see a weak line, that's a potential opportunity to destabilize the threat.

TAKING THE PLAY TO THE GROUND

- ⊙ Even if we take the play to the ground, the principles don't change, but the gravitas does. If you are down on the ground in a violent encounter, it is a bad situation that has just gotten worse. Your objective is to get off the ground as quickly and efficiently as possible. But to learn how to do that intuitively, you need to play on the ground first.
- ⊙ When standing, you have two points on the ground to create your base. If you go to one knee, then you have three points of contact: the knee and foot on the base leg and the foot of the bent leg. With three points, your base can be more stable than with two. On all fours, you have six points of contact, and lying flat out, your base is outlined by all the points of contact your body has with the ground.
- ⊙ The shape of the base changes based on the position of the body, but the center of gravity remains a constant. The more base you have surrounding your center of gravity, the harder you are to move. This is also true for the person trying to hurt you.

If you can have fun solving the meat puzzles, you are beginning to break down social taboos that keep good people from doing what is necessary to protect themselves and those they love. Those social taboos, or rules, run hard in your subconscious programming. Don't assume that you will rise to the occasion; those rules will stop you, unless your inner animal has been invited to play.

Once or twice a day, stop and look at the people in your vicinity and identify the weak and strong lines in how they are holding their structure. Look at people and see meat puzzles—animated skeletons—and play around with what you could do with what you see.

Resources

Miller, *Principles-Based Instruction for Self-Defense (And Maybe Life)*, chap. 4, section 2.1 (“Teaching Men” by Tammy Yard-McCracken).

———, *Training for Sudden Violence*.

Thalken, *Fight like a Physicist*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Based on your body in its current condition, what are your personal advantages/disadvantages?
- 2 How can you leverage them?
- 3 How might they work against you?

NATURAL TARGETS ON THE HUMAN BODY

LESSON 3

Self-defense is all about you discovering how to manage your socially programmed ethics in the face of a potentially violent encounter so that you go home safe. If you grew up with messages like “don’t hit your sister” and “play nice,” you have deep social programs that tell you that making damaging levels of contact is bad and wrong. In this lesson, targeting is turned into a skill so that your brain is better able to put it in the “skills” box, which can help overcome the social rules. You can frame it as “something I learned to do” rather than something your natural predatory self intuitively wants to do.

TECHNIQUE-BASED TRAINING

- ⦿ It doesn’t matter if your technical training comes from martial arts or from a self-defense course—all techniques have failure points. This is why we spend time on play before we get into technique. Every technique that you can be taught has a failure point; no technique will always work.
- ⦿ In fact, there are very few never or always answers in self-defense; remember, those are dangerous gods to worship. Similarly, there are equally few yes and no answers, because violence and conflict are moment-by-moment propositions.
- ⦿ Even the technical training of high-ranking, truly competent martial artists can fail them in an assault, when their skills are tested under a real attack. Their art sometimes doesn’t prepare them for the realities of violence in our current era.
- ⦿ Technical training is easy to teach and comfortable to learn because our brains like the formulaic paradigm this approach creates for us. But if you can’t adapt to the problem in front of you, then all the technical training in the world won’t help you. Formulas rarely apply point to point in real violence.



In real life, you aren't going to have the luxury of telling your threat, "Wait a minute; I need to stretch for a few minutes before you attack me." This means that you need to know how your body works cold. This is why you're not going to do a warm-up in this lesson. But for safety, if you know you are going to risk injury without the warm-up, do it.

- ⊙ We will hit specific technique work as we build, but for the time being, we need to stay in rehab mode—rehabilitating the human animal. It's this rehab that makes you adaptable, and the more adaptable you are, the harder you are to kill.

TARGETING

- ⊙ Having a working knowledge of the weapons your body possesses and how to target good locations on the threat's body are essential skills. Playing with targeting before working with specific striking methods is beneficial because without a target to hit, the weapon is an aimless tool.
- ⊙ Plus, targeting may actually be a natural skill. You know which parts of your body are more vulnerable and how they are vulnerable. For example, you would most likely wince if you watched someone's eyes being gouged, even if you have never experienced it, because you would know that it would hurt.
- ⊙ If you know what can hurt you, you also know where the vulnerable targets are on someone else. You are put together the same way.
- ⊙ The more you understand structure, the easier it is to know how to compromise it. Structure helps you understand targeting in a number of ways. Primarily, the more you understand how the bones line up and when and how that alignment creates strength, the more you'll also begin to see how you can compromise that structure by seeing where the weak points may be.

MARKING DRILLS

- ⊙ Many self-defense students—men and women both—struggle to find ways to cause damage, even simulated damage, during a class. Humans have become so domesticated that our social norms and rules prevent us from doing what is necessary to make contact effectively. When we look at other humans, instead of seeing a meat puzzle to solve, we see someone's sister, brother, son, or mom, and all the social rules engulf us like a tidal wave.

- ⦿ To help you get going, have a few things handy to play around with: washable markers to write on a blank wall or a small chair to put in the center of your room as well as an old T-shirt or blindfold. If you need to warm up to avoid injury, go through a warm-up before beginning.
- ⦿ Start by shadowboxing, light and slow. Imagine different places on a body you can hit and kick and try to string together three to four actions before you reset and start over. If you get moving too quickly, you may lose the mental part of the drill, so keep it slow.
- ⦿ Marking drills make this easier because you don't need to visualize. If you have a body to play with, you have a crash dummy. Work with open hands and find different targets working all around your partner. Go around the body once, solving the meat puzzle in front of you, and then give your partner a try.
- ⦿ If you don't have a live body to play with, there are a few alternatives. The simplest one is to use your imagination and visualize a human body. Another option is to put a chair in the center of the room so you have something three-dimensional to work around. Another option is using washable markers that are safe for walls, which you can use to lightly sketch out a body to work with (test the marker first to make sure it comes off easily).
- ⦿ When doing this drill, if you were working your hands and feet and you lost balance or struggled to move efficiently, pay attention to where your center of gravity is in relationship to your base. If you were out of balance, then your center of gravity had fallen far enough away from your base that you were no longer stable.
- ⦿ The part of your brain that gets involved during complex problem solving can work more slowly than your instincts, so be careful about overthinking.
- ⦿ If you work this drill with a live human and you're not damaging him or her—while that will keep your friendship intact—there are flaws in your training: You are either too far away, pulling your punches short of the target, or going slow. These are all necessary flaws to keep your meat puzzle from hating you; just don't turn the temporary flaws into deep habits.

REFINING YOUR TARGETING SKILLS

- ⦿ Let's take your intuitive targeting skills and refine them. There are a few foundational concepts for you to understand.
 - The target dictates the weapon. Use a soft weapon on a hard target; use a hard weapon on a soft target. The head region is generally a hard target while the abdomen is generally a soft target.
 - Your goals inform your choice of targets and, as a result, have a trickle-down effect and influence how you will weaponize your body. For example, there are targets that can disrupt or destabilize the threat. These won't take out the threat necessarily, but they can buy you time and distance. And if that time and distance is enough to help you get away safely, then it's a good day.



- ◉ Destabilizing is primarily about off-balancing someone. If your goal is to disrupt or destabilize another person, choose targets on his or her body and corresponding actions to make that happen. If your goal is to control the other person, then you need to dominate him or her and the situation so you can physically subdue his or her actions.
- ◉ Unless you have a duty to this goal, it's generally not recommended under the domain of self-defense. There are several body parts on the threat that you need to put your hands on, and you need to stay engaged through a barrage of possible counter attacks from him or her. There is no reason to assume this risk if you don't have to.
- ◉ If you need to incapacitate the threat, choose targets that will shut down the threat as quickly as possible. What's the most destructive thing you can do to create the maximum amount of damage in the most efficient way possible? Damage/destruction targets include the base of the skull and generally the head with a traumatic level of force; the throat, which is harder to access due to natural protection instincts; and long bones that can be broken (for example, jumping on a leg hanging over an edge).
- ◉ Remember that nothing works all the time on everyone, with maybe the exception of bashing in someone's skull with a heavy object, and even that's probably not always a given. How you choose your goal is based on the situation you're facing, your internal ethic around the use of force, and decision points as they relate to the law.

BLINDFOLD DRILLS

- ◉ When we are target hunting, our effectiveness and efficiency tends to degrade instead of improve. You need to solve the problem you have, not the problem you want. We can play with that by working from a grappling position.
- ◉ For this drill, you'll need an old T-shirt, or a blindfold if you're working with a partner. This gives you a significant amount of tactile and kinesthetic information to play with. If you have a partner, your partner—the sighted person—is your safety.

- ⦿ Choose a target and tell your partner which target you've chosen. Then, strike your partner. Don't let your partner cheat and help you; if you get it wrong, then you're wrong. If you don't know the name of the anatomy for the target you choose, simply describe it.
- ⦿ Without a partner, put yourself in front of a wall with an outlined person drawn on and make contact with what would be the right shoulder. Then, just close your eyes. Choose a target and touch where you think that would be located. Open your eyes and see how you did. Repeat the process, moving through different targets.
- ⦿ We can take this even deeper, drilling down into how instinctive targeting can be, with variations of the blindfold drill. For example, one variation of this drill involves defending incoming strikes.
- ⦿ Eyes are slow; bodies are fast. Many people improve dramatically when they take their eyes out of the equation. You can learn to do this with your eyes open by relying on your peripheral vision. Looking past your training partner or focusing on his or her collar helps build this skill. If the collar region makes it too tempting to chase hands with your eyes, then look a little lower—for example, the solar plexus area.

Resources

Miller, *Training for Sudden Violence*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are three sociocultural rules that govern your day-to-day choices regarding human interaction?
- 2 How do you feel about your ability to cause damage? Investigating your internal narrative is a critical aspect of self-defense.

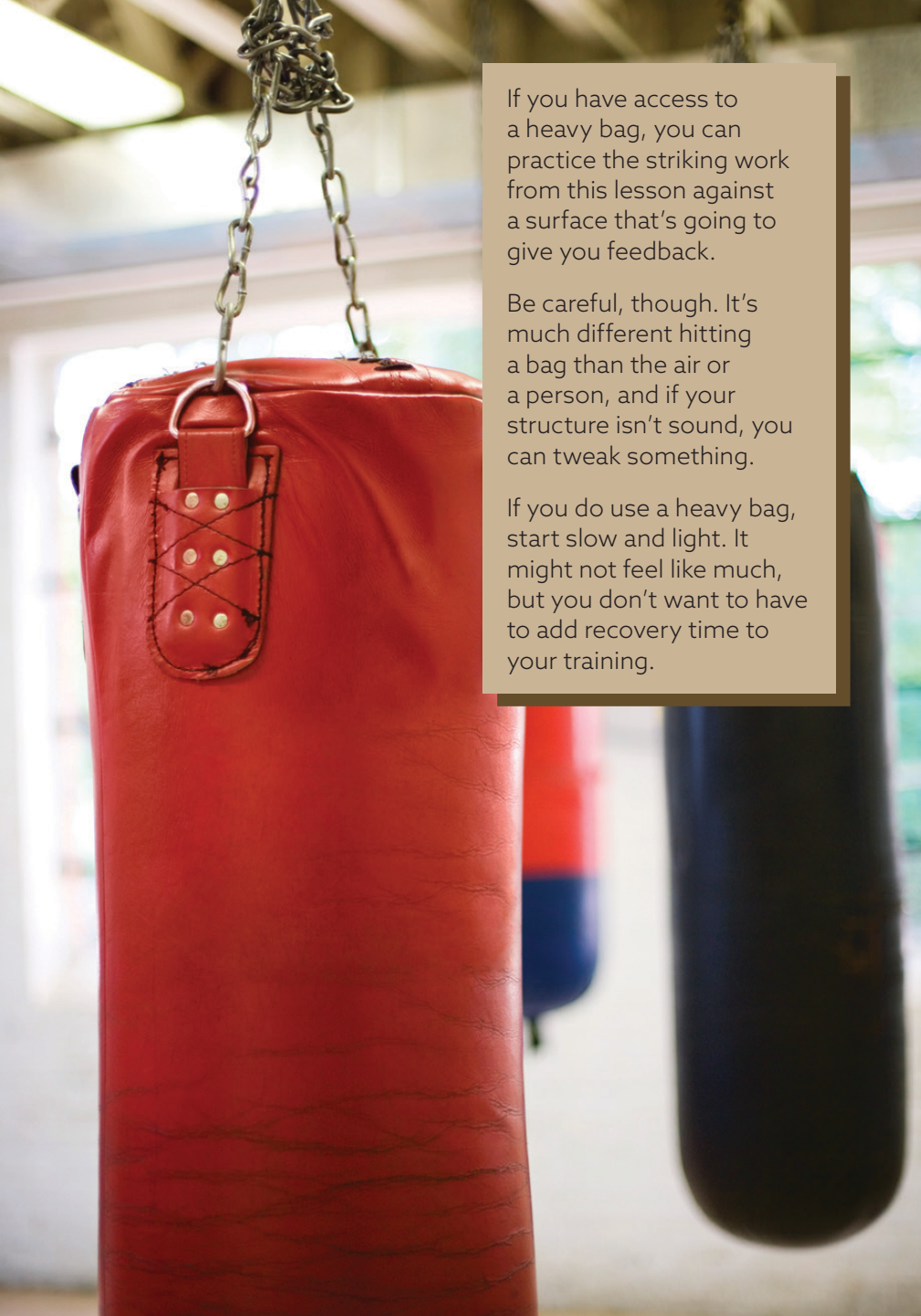
WEAPONIZING YOUR BODY

LESSON 4

The phrase “muscle memory” gets tossed around a lot, but it’s kind of a misnomer. What’s really happening is that we’ve done a thing so many times—we’ve run so many repetitions—that we have created neurological patterns or programs for that specific action or behavior. With enough reinforcement (i.e., more repetition), the patterns can become unconscious, automatic responses, or “muscle memory.” Intentionally building these neural patterns shifts us out of play and into training mode, and training is one of the four fundamental learning models humans respond to. When it comes to weaponizing your body, using a training model can be helpful for setting down part of our self-defense foundation.

STRIKES

- ⦿ To prepare for this exercise in striking, take a few minutes to warm up if you want to. Then, clear your space and set your feet in a neutral position under your body. The first round of reps involves working straight strikes with your palms. Straight strikes work down the line, so they hit the lines-and-circles principle.
- ⦿ If you have a partner, you can work together and coach each other—but don’t get too picky, because that can shut down learning.
- ⦿ It’s the rare circumstance that will let you throw one shot and walk away, so assume that one strike won’t be enough. In the video lesson, you will learn how to throw a series of combatives, such as jabs and crosses, either in a series of the same type or in combination. This will be done both with neutral feet and from a more stable fighting stance. This will help you develop patterns for a series of attacks, not just one or two. Try to get three or four strikes strung together before you start over.

A red leather heavy bag is suspended by a metal chain from the ceiling of a gym. The bag has a textured surface and a small leather patch with four metal studs near the top. In the background, other bags in blue and red are visible, though out of focus.

If you have access to a heavy bag, you can practice the striking work from this lesson against a surface that's going to give you feedback.

Be careful, though. It's much different hitting a bag than the air or a person, and if your structure isn't sound, you can tweak something.

If you do use a heavy bag, start slow and light. It might not feel like much, but you don't want to have to add recovery time to your training.

- ⦿ Next, you will learn how to use the same weapon—the open-hand palm strike—and take it on the circular action, because the principle is lines *and* circles. This will also serve as a review of your targeting work; when the target changes, because your structure changes, the principles stack, like combative Legos.

RANGE

- ⦿ Range is one of the principles that applies to both martial arts and self-defense, and it directly impacts the effectiveness of your weapons. Range is the distance between you and the threat. It defines whether or not you're close enough to take a hit or to land one of your own. Range also impacts which of your weapons you can use efficiently and effectively.
- ⦿ You already understand this: When you reach across your desk for a pen, you don't have to consciously strategize how to get your hand from point A to point B; your body adjusts intuitively based on the distance between you and that pen. You know what you have to do to be able to reach it. That's range finding.
- ⦿ Throwing a circular strike means that you need to be a little closer to the threat than if you're throwing a straight strike. If you are too far away to hit the threat, you might be able to kick the threat instead, and that also means that you are a little farther away from the threat's weapons as well. That's a good thing, but it's also not foolproof.

KICKS

- ⦿ Self-defense kicks are not complicated and don't require high levels of athleticism. This is another difference between self-defense and martial arts: In self-defense, there are no fancy spinning back kicks—just solid kicks to slow or stop your attacker's action.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will learn how to do front kicks with each leg starting from a neutral position; then, you will learn how to do front kicks with your dominant leg starting in a fighting stance. You will also learn how to do side and back stomp kicks.

KNEES AND ELBOWS

- ⦿ Next, you will work your way back up the body looking for new weapons, starting with your knees. Key targets on the threat's body for the knees include the groin and the stomach. In the video lesson, you will learn how to use your knees from both a neutral position and from a fighting stance.
- ⦿ Moving up the body, next comes the elbows. Elbows are great weapons that can work both circles and lines, but they tend to be used mostly as circular strikes running parallel to the ground. In the video lesson, you will learn how to extend your elbows forward, to the side, and to the rear in a horizontal position. When extending your elbow backward, keep your knees a little softer to maintain balance. Working with the circles, you can use your elbows in other ways, such as with an uppercut.

PUNCHES

- ⦿ When working with punches, a closed fist requires good structural integrity to keep from hurting yourself. You also need particularly accurate targeting skills. If you're aiming for a good fist target, such as the chin, and the threat drops that chin for protection, you may land that punch square in the threat's forehead. And that's a bad day for your hand.
- ⦿ But straight punches do have their place, and you will learn the form of them in the video lesson.
- ⦿ Straight punches can be practiced in front of a mirror so you can see the structure without turning your hand around to your own sight line. Stand in front of the mirror, throw a few punches, and watch your structure.

AFTER-INCIDENT RITUAL

- ⦿ If your self-defense situation does become physical, the goal is to limit the damage you take. That implies you're probably going to take some damage. One problem with this is you may not experience the impact equal to the damage it's causing; adrenaline does funny things to our pain threshold.

- ⦿ The last thing you want is to prevail in an encounter only to bleed out because you didn't know you had taken that level of damage until it was too late. This requires practice because under duress, you will not think to do it unless it is a deeply trained pattern or ritual.
- ⦿ The following is your after-incident ritual:
 - Get to safety.
 - Check yourself. (Is there blood? Wipe and check again.)
 - Call 911.

Practice shadowboxing patterns as often as you can—because in a real encounter, you won't have time to stop and remember what you learned in this lesson.

You need to have a broad enough range of weapons that you have both trained in and played around with. This will give you both the strength of ingrained neural programs and the adaptability of play.

Resources

Quinn, *Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling*.

Thalken, *Fight like a Physicist*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are some of the cultural and social influences around throwing a punch? For example, how many fight films do you see effective combatants using open-handed strikes versus straight punches?
- 2 How do you think this has impacted your attitude about how you “should” hit?

GENERATING POWER BY PLAYING SMART

LESSON 5

If you are ever confronted with a violent situation, the you that will be responding is not the you that you are familiar with, who likes good lighting and solid footing. The you that you know well has decent fine motor skills and a brain that does what it's supposed to (most of the time anyway). The playing and training you is not the you making decisions in a body altered by the survival stress response—the body's alarm system.



The you under threat is not the you that you're accustomed to.

THE SURVIVAL STRESS RESPONSE

- ⦿ When the survival stress response kicks in, your sympathetic nervous system kicks on. The survival stress response includes a cocktail of hormones pulsing through your brain and body. It's a mixture of adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol, and under the survival stress response influence, you become stupid, slow, and uncoordinated.
- ⦿ The purpose of the survival stress response is multifaceted. Specifically, it pushes blood to the core of your body and fires up gross motor systems. It also slows down ancillary functions, such as digesting lunch and solving the *New York Times* Crossword puzzle.
- ⦿ You might think about this reaction as the make-ready component for our fight/flight/freeze mechanism. In this state, complex thought is something we just don't have time for, and because our body is focusing on gross motor skills, the fine motor skills fall off, and this contributes, in part, to the degrading coordination.
- ⦿ The good news is that playing and training can help build in compensations so you are able to keep some of those fine motor skills and develop a capacity for high-speed problem solving while maintaining valuable coordination even inside the survival stress response. You're not going to accomplish this in a single course like this one, but keep at it and it will come.

If you need to warm up before doing the shadowboxing in the video lesson, do so. Your shadowboxing should string together four actions, and this can include stepping back and clearing away from the threat, or you can put four solid combatives together. Go slow and keep your skills solid.

Keep in mind that this is not the you dosed on the survival stress response cocktail, so you can think, train, and develop neural programs that in the future might run for you on autopilot.

WAYS TO GENERATE POWER

- ⦿ The human animal has an intuitive intelligence for survival. One of the ways humans have been able to hang on to our position at the top of the food chain is our ability to learn how to fight smarter rather than harder. We can do that by playing with three methods of power generation, starting with what most people are familiar with.
- ⦿ If you have ever watched a boxing match or a mixed martial arts (MMA) fight, you have seen this in action: building power generation by creating a solid kinetic chain. A kinetic chain is the notion that all the different parts of your body have an effect on one another during movement.
- ⦿ When one part of your body goes into motion, it creates a chain of events that affects the movement of its neighboring body parts and systems as well. When they all work together—when they are connected—power is enhanced.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will try this by standing in a stable, neutral base and doing a series of jabs and crosses. You will also do a series of jabs and crosses from your fighting stance. Then, you will learn how to add a spiral action.
- ⦿ Another way to generate power is through momentum. Momentum is the quantity of motion of a moving body, measured as a product of its mass and velocity. In other words, the more mass you have and the more speed you can put behind it, the more impact you have.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will learn how to play with momentum. You will learn a new combative that builds off of horizontal elbow strikes: the side hammer. You will learn how to do this move with both your left and right elbows; you can go as deep on the rotation as you like based on your balance.
- ⦿ You can use the momentum generated to the rear by stepping through and striking with the opposite hand. If the problem is in front of you, working the same action won't make your structure happy. What would work, though, is adding a weapon from your environment—a sticklike object, such as a lamp. Also, if the threat is in front of you, you can shift to using vertical action with the hammer, which is the natural hammer swing.

- ⦿ Momentum can be a force multiplier in the kinetic chain. You can also use momentum as a power generator when the energy comes from someone else.
- ⦿ In addition to kinetic power generation and playing with momentum, the third power generator is exploiting gravity. Gravity's influence has always been there; you learned to manage for it and exploit it by the age of two. Biomechanically, walking is just a series of controlled falls.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will learn how to weaponize gravity—with what in Chiron Training is called the drop step.
- ⦿ Humans are pretty cool creatures because we have this fantastic ability to use our creativity to turn just about anything into a tool, making our lives easier by increasing the efficiency of any given task. Self-defense is no different. Finding creative ways to optimize your power generation, should you ever need to, is hardwired into your DNA. You just have to give yourself permission to explore it.

Practice the drills from this lesson on your own and see if you can find even more ways to increase your power and your efficiency.

Resources

Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Quinn, *Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling*.

Thalken, *Fight like a Physicist*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Using a threat's momentum to your advantage has a lot of upsides. What are the potential downsides?
- 2 What are you noticing about how you practice the after-incident ritual? Discuss why this is an area of practice and training that frequently gets neglected.

EXPANDING WHAT YOU ARE WILLING TO SEE AND DO

LESSON 6

Look at one of the chairs in your environment. What can you do with it? You can sit on it, stand on it, sit on the floor and use it as a table, and maybe sleep in it. If it's made out of wood, you can break it down and burn it for heat, or light, or to cook over. You can carve down the end of a leg for a spear, use part of it as a splint, and break the legs apart to form chunky drumsticks. If it has screws, you can take those out and use them to scratch pictures or words into a hard surface, to cut into things, and maybe to stab somebody if they're long enough. If the chair has fabric, tearing it up into strips gives you a tourniquet and the stuffing could be used to pack a wound, or you could use the same strips and stuffing to gag somebody. You can use the chair as a barrier, or you can throw it at someone. Whether you see just a chair or a hundred possibilities depends on your affordances.

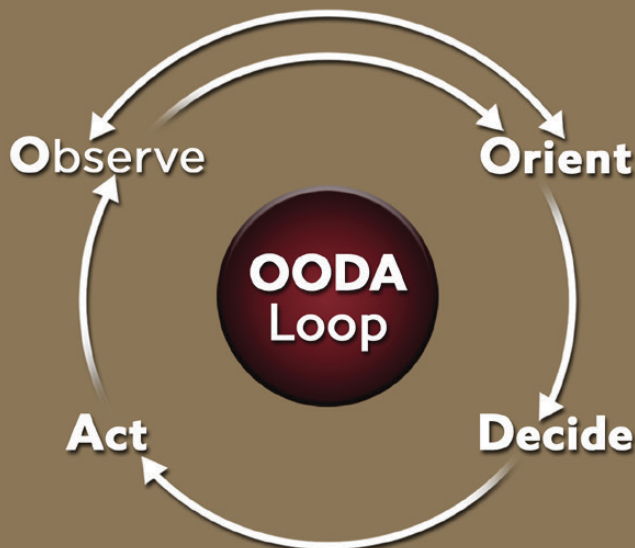
AFFORDANCES

- ⦿ Affordances describes how you see a thing or a person and how you see controls what you can do. This is a key concept in self-defense. If the way you see people and your environment is defined only by how a socially responsible person sees these things, then when you encounter someone with broader affordances, you will be at a remarkable disadvantage.
- ⦿ Little by little, we've been pressing out at the edges of those socially acceptable affordances so that if you do encounter someone who is comfortable with violence, you'll be able to see the environment more like they do. Our one-step drill is ultimately about learning how to see—expanding your affordances around the human body and what you can do with it.

You might want to warm up before doing the one-step drills in this video lesson.

- ⦿ The video lesson shows you how to do a few one-step drills. The first round is a type of warm-up as well. If you're working with a meat puzzle—a partner—follow these protocols:
 - Watch for safety.
 - Make full contact.
 - Use good power generation.
 - If it's going to the ground, do this cooperatively and let the person taking the fall set him- or herself down in place before continuing.
 - Go slow.
- ⦿ The more comfortable you get playing this way, the more you're going to want to speed up—but don't. That's when people break their toys.
- ⦿ If you're working on your own, you can play both sides, identifying good targets and possible golden moves (here, you have a broader vantage point, so you can see more); or you can work the drill dry, imagining a partner's movements and then executing your own in space, kind of like shadowboxing. This gets easier the more you work with live bodies, so make sure to find someone to play with once in a while.
- ⦿ With one-step, you get to safely expand your affordances, because of all the training flaws—timing, speed, range, power generation—we are only limiting speed. The reason this opens up opportunities to stretch your affordances is because by slowing everything down, you have plenty of time to work through the “O bounce” in the OODA (observe, orient, decide, act) loop. This is a decision cycle developed by US Air Force Colonel John Boyd.
- ⦿ Violence happens fast—faster than most people are accustomed to—and there is a ton of information coming at you from multiple sources, including the threat, the environment, and other people. In the midst of this chaos, your job is to figure out what's happening moment by moment. Is that a fist coming at your face? Is the threat pulling out a cell phone or a knife?

"O Bounce"



- ⦿ The first O in the acronym OODA stands for “observe”; this is the literal act of noticing that something is coming at you. “Orient,” which is what the second O stands for, is the process of figuring out what that something is—the cell phone or the knife, for example. “Decide,” the D in the acronym, is the internal commitment to do something, and “act,” the A in the acronym, is acting on that decision. And this can all happen at the speed of microseconds.
- ⦿ The idea of the freeze in our fight/flight/freeze mechanism is that we get stuck bouncing back and forth like a pinball between the observe and orient phases, never getting to decision or action.

- ⦿ The ability to see the chaos, choose the useful information, and move on it is a primitive evolutionary skill all modern-day humans have. The *Homo sapiens* who weren't very good at it didn't survive long enough to pass on their genetics. You are the product of a very successful genetic line; that's how you got here.
- ⦿ So, bringing this back to one-step, by keeping the action slow, you have time to observe, orient, make a decision, and act on it. If it wasn't a particularly stellar decision, then you learned something fantastic with zero consequences.
- ⦿ Next, let's dig deeper into applying self-defense distinctions and principles so we can open up those affordances even wider, starting with structure disruption.
- ⦿ There are many ways to interfere with someone's structure. Because you know how to set good structure, now you can just flip it and use that same knowledge to disrupt someone's structure to your advantage. This is called playing with skeletons.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will learn how to do a few different structure disruptions, including two-way action, which is better than working the action in only one direction. You can grab your partner or watch and make mental notes about how the partners in the video get into each other's structure. If you have a partner, find three different ways to disrupt his or her structure; then, switch and let your partner find three ways to disrupt yours.
- ⦿ Then, you will apply this to a one-step drill, finding ways to integrate leverage and structure disruption. Practice this on your own so you can play more with how to see the opportunities to mess with someone's skeleton.
- ⦿ Finally, you will change it up again and bring targeting into it. Working with a very slow version of one-step, you'll go back to a one-for-one pattern. Your objective is to apply the phrase "closest weapon"/"closest target" to your game. In other words, find the closest weapon and the closest target, even though it may not seem like the most powerful attack. If you have a partner, you can take turns helping each other see weapons/targets; if not, watch the partners in the video and see if you can find targets they missed.

GOALS

- ⦿ How you see someone and how you see yourself will inform the decisions you make, and those decisions will be driven by your goals. If a conflict goes physical, your primary directive is to end it and, in so doing, go home safe. Ending the encounter can be accomplished by four possible tactics: disrupt, dominate, disable, and surrender. Which one will get you home is dictated by the circumstances.

Three of the four tactics to end an encounter—disrupt, dominate, and disable—were covered in the targeting work found in lesson 3.

- If you can successfully disrupt the threat's actions and intentions—you don't defeat the threat, but he or she decides to give up and go away because you are no longer a target he or she wants to pursue—this is not a bad option.
 - Dominating is about control. Can you successfully gain physical control and subdue the other person? There aren't many circumstances in which this goal would be necessary, unless safely subduing violent humans is part of your job.
 - Disabling is how you truly defeat someone. If you disable the threat, you have broken long bones or knocked the threat unconscious—or both.
 - Surrendering involves complying with the threat's demands, and if it's physical, don't fight back. Protect yourself as best you can until it's over.
- ⦿ You may not like some of these, but that's okay; all four are an option, whether you like them or not. And if you automatically eliminate one from your arsenal, you begin to shut down your affordances.



- ⦿ Tactical bingo is a game we can use to play with this. Your partner will choose your tactic for you by calling out one of four: disable, dominate, disrupt, or surrender. If you're playing by yourself, respond to the commands from the partners in the video on your own or watch them and see how they respond to the calls.
- ⦿ Escaping is the final move that gets you home. It's part of your primary directive and should always be the ultimate goal. In one-step, there's a fun way to check on the reality of escaping from a physical encounter: an escape check. If you think you can get clear—take a step away—then pause and you can have your partner advance a step and see if that puts him or her back in range to grab you, hit you, etc. If so, then that one move isn't as clear as you thought it was.
- ⦿ When you're practicing on your own, add in an escape check, and don't forget to run the after-incident ritual.
- ⦿ Anything we work with is fair game in one-step. Don't be afraid to use the attacks as well as the defensive actions as you're playing. If you can see the opportunity to use a skill we worked on specifically, you are getting better at seeing opportunities in general.

- ⦿ If you see a vulnerability in your partner, then you'll begin to intuit your own potential vulnerabilities. You'll also begin to read the subtle changes in your partner—such as weight distribution, body posture, muscle activation, and facial expressions—that tip off what he or she is planning. They're all cues that part of your brain can quickly process through the observe and orient steps of the OODA loop and work so efficiently to get you to decide and act that it happens below conscious thought.
- ⦿ But when you freeze—when you get stuck in the so-called O bounce—there is a tactic that seems to work really well in getting you unstuck. The freeze is a natural survival mechanism. Eyes are drawn to moving objects; if you're not moving, you're not as easy to spot.
 - First, you need to recognize that you're frozen. Signs that you are in a freeze include auditory occlusion, tunnel vision, or changes in acuity; time feeling like it speeds up or slows down; and not having the feeling of panic.
 - Then, you need to do any two things (according to anecdotal evidence) that impact the physical universe.



- Lastly, after you do those two things, you need to act. Change the behavioral loop. This is critical. The primitive aspect of your brain is working to keep you alive. If what you've done for the past few seconds hasn't gotten you killed, the primitive you is going to tell you to do it again—and again, and again—even if it is not the right thing to do. You have to break the freeze, or that loop keeps going. Even trained professionals will freeze, and you will, too, so you want to be able to gain control when it happens.

As your affordances expand, this expansion isn't isolated to self-defense. You'll begin to see your relationships, environment, work problems, and pretty much everything from a broader perspective. The good things get better and the problems get easier to solve.

Resources

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Sometimes a behavioral freeze happens inside of action. This looks like someone repeating a behavior that clearly isn't working over and over again. In extreme cases, this can get you hurt or killed because you can't shift gears into the necessary actions for survival. What are some ways this happens on a less critical level? Yelling across the house at your barking dog (to get him or her to quiet down) and doing it several times with no result would be a subtle type of behavioral freeze—repeating an ineffective action multiple times.
- 2 Consider the four tactics for ending a violent encounter. Do you find yourself resistant to any of them? What causes the resistance?

RESPONDING TO THE AMBUSH

LESSON 7

The term “reactionary gap” is used to describe the distance between the awareness that something is happening and the moment we take action in response to that trigger. The reactionary gap is tied in with both the survival stress response (lesson 5), which is the fight/flight/freeze mechanism programmed into our survival instincts, and the OODA loop (lesson 6) and how it interacts with the survival stress response. Get surprised and our reactionary gap has a tendency to get pretty wide, giving our brains a chance to work through the observe-orient-decide-act cycle. And even if this only takes a few seconds, a whole lot can happen inside of just one second.

BEAR HUGS

- ⦿ Think about what someone can do inside your reactionary gap, particularly if that person wants you surprised. The counter to this kind of ambush-type attack has to come out of your body before you can think.
- ⦿ There are two ways we can create a programmed response. One is through training—the repetitions that create neurological connections bundled up together in an autopilot program. This lesson starts with a few of those.
- ⦿ If the threat is smart, he or she knows you have a better chance of fighting back if you see him or her coming, so these attacks come out of your periphery or completely from behind. One example of this type of attack is a bear hug.

No warm up – working with surprise attacks and ambushes means working with the body cold.

The average well-trained martial artist can throw eight punches inside of a single second.



- ⦿ This type of ambush has a little discretionary time built in because the threat isn't hitting you or otherwise trying to cause damage—yet. The distance between the grab and what comes next may only be a second or two, but that buys you time that you can use. You will practice doing reps of several types of bear hugs in the video lesson.
- ⦿ These attacks can be used to pick you up and pile drive you, to drive you forward, or to pick you up and carry you off. What was practiced in the lesson is a response that works if your reactionary gap is short enough to react before it turns into something worse. To get your skills at that level, you need more practice than what was done in the lesson—what Daniel Coyle in his book *The Talent Code* calls deep practice. If you want skills at that level, you'll need to put in more reps.

DRACULA'S CAPE

- ⦿ The other, more dynamic type of ambush is violent from the outset. This will come at you harder and faster than anything you have ever experienced and with more violence than your thoughts can process. This means you need an immediate counter action—something that doesn't require thought and can give you the greatest-possible advantage as quickly and effectively as possible.
- ⦿ The training done in the lesson with the bear hug-type grabs requires a second or two inside the reactionary gap to assess. But if you don't have that second, you need to respond with a skill that's anchored as deep as instinct.
- ⦿ A response called Dracula's cape works to a variety of attacks from almost all directions. It's a single action and doesn't demand that you think about what's happening. You can act first and assess second.
- ⦿ Let's take this up a notch to stimulus-response work, which edges us a little closer to creating a conditioned response. As you will see demonstrated in the video lesson, this involves doing Dracula's cape with kick shields.

The four fundamental modes of human learning are teaching, training (running reps), conditioning, and play.



- ⦿ If you're working by yourself, the sound of the presenter clapping will be the stimulus. When she claps, you'll drop into Dracula's cape in any direction. Do not think; just move. If you have a partner, you'll need a small pillow you can toss or something soft, such as a pool noodle, you can poke at your partner.
- ⦿ To make this even more interesting, if you're the intended target, count backward from 50 out loud while you're waiting for the noodle or the clap. When you reset, start over again. This will give your thinking brain something else to do. If you want to make this conditioning even deeper, you can add more people to the game.

- ⦿ Pick the conditioned-response drill that your body likes and suits your circumstances and stick with it. Having two conditioned responses can put your brain back into thinking mode while it tries to figure out which one to choose in the middle of an ambush—which is not a great idea. The grabs worked on previously in this lesson fell into the arena of training. Run reps until you get it right, and then run them some more until you can't get them wrong.
- ⦿ Talking about the reality of an ambush-level assault is sobering. Training for it, though, should be fun, even if you are training with a high level of aggression. Let your human animal come to the party.

Resources

McSweeney and Murphy, *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Operant and Classical Conditioning*.
Miller, *Facing Violence*.
Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are some of your preexisting conditioned-response behaviors? For example, are you tentative about touching a hot stove? You probably touched the surface once, a long time ago, and that was enough to develop an instinctive reaction.
- 2 What are some of the circumstances in which bear hug–type attacks might be used? And what might be the secondary action? In other words, if a man grabs another full-sized male from behind, what do you think is going to happen next?

HOW VIOLENCE OCCURS

LESSON 8

Training programs in both the self-defense and the martial arts industry can get anchored into the myth that your physical skills should be the primary focus of your training. But while it's undoubtedly good to train physically, your physical skills are the last line of defense. Using them means that everything else—your early warning system, ability to de-escalate increasing tensions, and ability to find a safe exit—failed. People get injured, and sometimes those injuries have lifelong consequences. Understanding how violence escalates and how you might be targeted is just as important—if not more important—than the physical stuff.

THE PROCESS OF VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS

- ⦿ Every violent encounter has a process. The process may be highly evolved, or it can be a response to more unconscious drivers. Either way, when a human being engages in violent action, particularly what is called criminal violence, the action is governed by specific goals and parameters.
- ⦿ Ultimately, your primary goal is to get home safely, with as little collateral damage as possible. But your goal is not particularly important to the threat—the “bad guy.”
- ⦿ The experience of violence can be pretty chaotic, but the process of violence is pretty logical. What's important in the threat's mind is driven by the threat's goals. The goals are the things that must happen. The goals are the reason for the violent action. Adjectives like “senseless” are applied to violence in news reports, and it looks senseless from the outside, but it isn't. There is a reason for what's happening.
- ⦿ For example, the threat's goal is to take your money. You don't know what the threat's internal motivations are, but you know by his or her actions that he or she is after your resources—your money. The motivations behind the threat's goal will help you decide how far he or she is willing to go to accomplish that goal.

- ⦿ And if the goals are what must happen, then the other half of the equation is made up by the parameters. For the threat, the parameters are the things he or she needs to control for—the things he or she wants to prevent or limit. In general, the threat doesn't want to get caught and doesn't want to get hurt or take damage.
- ⦿ The goals and parameters become the foundation of the threat's action plan. Looking at this through the eyes of the threat, you can begin to understand how a threat develops his or her target lists. A target is a type of human who satisfies the goals while simultaneously falling well inside of the parameters. And because the goals are going to vary, there is more than one way to be targeted.

Letting yourself think like the threat can be uncomfortable; we don't like to see ourselves as the "bad guy" of the narrative. But being able to take on the perspective of the threat can be like gaining a super power in self-defense.

It's more than climbing into the mind of the threat; it's about getting into your own psychology and the choices you will confront if you ever have to go physical in your self-defense.

- ⦿ Your job is to become aware of the various target lists that can exist, which lists you may be on, which lists you can get off of, and which lists you can't control for. The best way to do this is to think like the threat.
- ⦿ If you're the threat, you're going to look at your goals and parameters and use them to figure out which target presents the lowest level of risk for the highest reward, and one of the simplest ways to figure out where you fall on this risk-reward scale is to think like a threat.
- ⦿ This may not feel easy, though, because you probably have a pretty strong set of personal ethics programmed in by your culture—rules defining what it means to be a responsible contributing member of society—and there's a pretty good chance those rules don't include spending your day practicing how you're going to attack somebody.

- ⦿ Strip back this domestication and you'll find that you are instinctively capable of thinking like a threat. It is part of our natural state as apex-level predators. But that reality can get really uncomfortable to embrace because we have made this binary culturally: We are either the good guys in white hats or the bad guys who wear black ski masks.
- ⦿ One of the best ways to get good at your own personal safety is to get more comfortable with your predatory side. Rather than think about this material from the mind-set that this is what the *bad guys* do, see if you can drop that and just think about this as what *humans* do.

ELEMENTS THAT INFORM THE PROCESS OF A VIOLENT ACTION

- ⦿ There are six primary elements for the process of violent crime. Keep in mind, though, what constitutes criminal violence is culturally driven and is going to vary in different parts of the world.
 1. **Who am I looking for?** When looking at violence and humans, people tend to lump behavior and targets into the same category, but they are not synonymous. If you are on your cell phone and distracted, this behavior may make you a better target, but the bigger picture is the target pool itself. As the threat, you will choose a target population based on your goals. For example, if you want to mug someone for the contents of his or her wallet and expensive watch, you might target out-of-town businesspeople.
 2. **Where will I find them?** If the target is out-of-town businesspeople, the threat is going to have specific hunting grounds where the out-of-town people are going to gather. Just as antelope herds gather in grassy plains, out-of-town businesspeople tend to gather around hotels near conference centers and airports. These will be the threat's hunting grounds.
 3. **Who do I choose?** Selection is about narrowing down the pool. On any given night, there may be a few hundred out-of-town businesspeople at the hotels near the airport. A businessperson wearing a good-quality suit and nice watch who has had too much to drink and is overweight would be the weakest antelope in the herd.



Don't assume that getting you isolated has to mean getting you completely alone. If you're distracted and disengaged enough from your surroundings, you have pretty much isolated yourself—even in the presence of other people.

4. **How can I get you alone?** There are five primary tactics that work for isolating a target.
- a. **Lure.** If your flirting with a drunk businessperson in the hotel bar is working, you can lure the businessperson away—for example, by suggesting you go somewhere “more private.”
 - b. **Follow.** You can hang out until the primary heads out to his or her hotel room and follow him or her. All you have to do is pretend you're also a hotel guest, which is not hard to do.
 - c. **Trick.** You can trick the businessperson into opening his or her wallet by maneuvering the conversation so that he or she wants to give you a business card.

- d. **Intimidate.** As a tactic, intimidation is a little more complicated. You have to be sure that you can pull it off, and size is a factor. If you are 6 feet tall and weigh 300 pounds, by size alone, you may have everything you need to gain control. If you don't have size to your advantage, you can use tools to up your intimidation abilities; a knife quietly pressed into the target's ribs might do it regardless of how tall you are or how much you weigh.
 - e. **Wait.** If you're patient, you can use waiting as a method for isolating your target. Waiting gives you the freedom to stalk your target and collect enough information to make tactics like luring and tricking the target that much easier to execute. Many people work hard to keep their daily routines efficient, such as taking the easiest traffic routes and picking up the mail while walking the dog every day at 6 pm. Efficiency creates routines, and as a threat, you can pick up on your target's patterns. You'll know when your target will be alone; you just need to wait for the pattern to put him or her there.
5. **How do I get psychological control over you?** Psychological control is about preventing your target from fighting back. If you are bigger or stronger than your target, then threatening severe bodily injury may work. Notice how this ties back into intimidation. There are other tools in your toolbox here, though. You can also behave erratically; if your target thinks you're crazy, then he or she will be afraid of what you are capable of. You can charge at your target with so much speed and surprise that you can shock him or her into submission. You can use your target's hope against him or her—hope that the target is going to come out of this okay if he or she doesn't scream, for example. But the promise of hope is almost always a lie.
6. **How do you gain enough physical control to guarantee that your target can't resist?** While psychological control is about convincing your threat that he or she doesn't want to fight back, physical control ensures that your target can't fight back. What's the quickest and most efficient way to make certain your target can't fight back? How would you efficiently and effectively disable someone? If you are going to keep your target from fighting with physical control, you have to eliminate your target's ability to fight back—by causing damage.



Most people think of the physical part of self-defense in terms of "fighting." Unfortunately, this word sends a mixed message because the idea of gaining physical control over another human is not a lesson about becoming a good fighter.

Fighters are trained to be effective combatants hemmed in by a powerful set of rules. The rules—designed to control the degree of violence—are critical in sport and are less obvious but equally powerful in chest-beating brawls. If you defend yourself by following the social rules of a good human being, you are going to be at a remarkable disadvantage.

BE A HARD TARGET

- ⦿ Effective self-defense is staying off the target lists created by these six elements. You can view these elements as part of a checklist for turning avoidance into a concrete skill set. Don't be in the target group, and because you just can't get out of some target groups, don't be an easy target. Instead, be a hard target. Be a nightmare; be difficult to kill.
- ⦿ And this applies to mind-set. You can't know where your boundaries are until you try to find them; you can't push those boundaries out until you know where they are. So, this video lesson helps you play around with finding some of your boundaries.
- ⦿ Research conducted by Lucy Johnston shows that how you move communicates volumes about your agility, gender, and overall attitude—including your confidence as a human being, or an apex-level predator. Certain patterns of movement increase your standing on the high-reward/low-risk scale, and that's one thing you do not want to get better at.
- ⦿ It's a myth in our culture that who we are is deeply defined—that our personalities are distinct. But you can be whomever you need to be to get a mission accomplished. And what you say inside your own head about yourself influences how your body moves, and how you move is being observed by all the other humans around you—the good guys and the bad guys. If your narrative tends to push you toward a high-reward/low-risk list in the eyes of a potential threat, then write a new one.
- ⦿ How you think about yourself writes a story all over the outside of your body. The video lesson includes an exercise that applies a construct from social psychology called priming, which tells us that we can be somewhat programmed to respond to stimuli in specific ways by exposure to previous cues. You can practice this in some other ways, too:
 - Imagine yourself as a US Navy SEAL, or Nelson Mandela, or a classic villain and spend an hour moving the way you would as that person.
 - Grab your phone and start a video. Sit for 60 to 90 seconds like a scared rabbit cornered by a hungry coyote; then, switch it up and be the coyote. Play back the video and see what happens.

- While you can't completely eliminate yourself as a possible reward, you can increase the degree to which you present as a high-risk target. Be a hard target, and be safe.

Resources

Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are some of your daily routines that would be easy to identify if someone was watching for your patterns and habits?
- 2 If you needed to quickly change up your route home from work, what are the alternate routes you could take?
- 3 What might you be a “high reward” for? For example, a healthy male in good physical condition under the age of 40 might be targeted by a guy looking to prove something by taking on a strong opponent in a public place, such as a pub. Think about the six elements of a violent crime and compare those elements to yourself and see what you come up with. Be careful, though; don't turn this into an internal scare tactic. Knowing what target pool you fall into is knowledge, and that knowledge is power.

PREDATOR BEHAVIOR AND VIOLENCE

LESSON 9

The highest order in self-defense is to avoid violence, and to avoid violence, you need to see the markers signaling a potentially violent situation before it unfolds. How you avoid a threat will depend on your ability to assess the situation, including where the threat's behavior falls on the social to asocial scale. The affordances governing social and asocial violence are qualitatively different, and what you use to avoid and de-escalate social violence can be turned and used against you by an asocial predator. You need to know the difference and how they bridge.

ASOCIAL PREDATORS

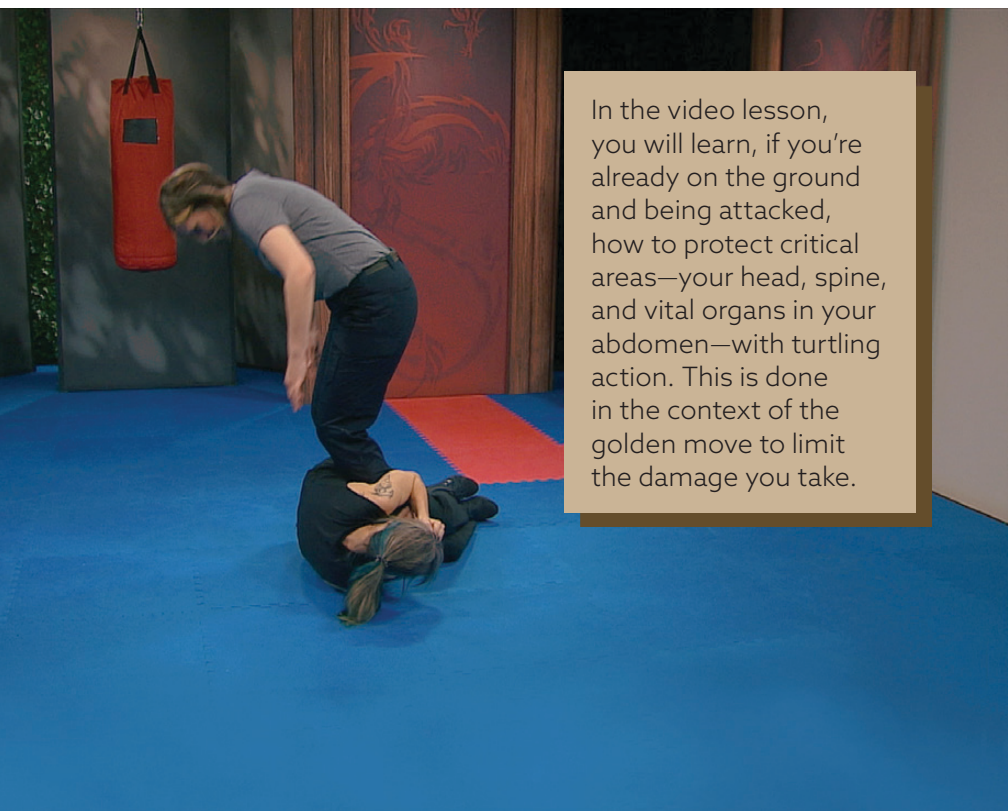
- ⊙ Asocial violence is primarily driven by two motivators: An asocial predator will choose you as a target because you either present the greatest possibility of providing the predator with the resources he or she needs or because you reward the predator with the greatest amount of enjoyment for his or her efforts.

Proxemics references the way humans use space to communicate. The more comfortable and familiar people are with each other, the more comfortable they'll be inside each other's space.

We're generally pulled in toward people we like or can meet our needs in some way. It could be someone we just want to meet, but proxemic pulls typically indicate that no threat is detected between the two parties. A negative proxemics pull is when someone gets close with the purpose of causing damage.

- ⊙ An asocial predator sees you as an ATM machine, a drugstore, or a toy. You are not a person, and the idea that you are like the predator—that he or she might have empathy for you in any way—doesn't exist in the predator's thinking.
- ⊙ An asocial predator choosing a target for resources wants to ensure that he or she doesn't get caught and has enough time to complete the mission without being interrupted. This means that he or she needs to choose a target who he or she can isolate or is already alone.
- ⊙ Sarah was alone after having dinner at a friend's apartment—a rundown flat in a sketchy part of town—when she was robbed outside her home. She pulled into her parking spot, got out of her car, and, as she started walking toward her door, was held at gunpoint by a male for her purse.
- ⊙ What made her a good target? Was it just luck? Did the threat know when she would get home? Probably not. The dinner was not part of a pattern. But he would have understood that a street of condos and townhomes serves as an anchor point.
- ⊙ All humans have anchor points: our own personal safe spaces we retreat to for safety, security, and recovery from the dynamics of daily life. Sarah's anchor point was an upscale complex in a city with a depressed economy. She drove a new vehicle and dressed in the style of someone who lives in a comfortable income—nonverbal communication of her financial status.
- ⊙ And although the threat wasn't hunting Sarah specifically, those factors made her a good “who”; it was just luck that he picked that particular night to be in her parking lot. The “where” was the threat's hunting grounds: Upscale community means resources. The “when” was after dark, when shadows are the hunter's friend.
- ⊙ One of the things that made Sarah qualify as low-hanging fruit—why he chose her instead of waiting for someone else—was that Sarah was also frightened before she got out of her car. Leaving her friend's apartment in a sketchy part of town as the sun was setting made Sarah nervous, and that feeling stuck with her all the way home.

- ◉ Sarah's body language broadcast that she was scared; with her head down and quick, tense actions, she moved quickly but without confidence. She was already frightened, so the threat could assume that she would be easy to startle and overwhelm. Her behavior told him that she was unlikely to put up a fight.
- ◉ In Sarah's situation, the threat was hanging out a few cars down from where she parked, giving him time to run a silent victim interview. She presented as a low-risk/high-reward target and passed the victim interview with flying colors.
- ◉ What could Sarah have done differently? She could start by doing a quick scan of her rearview mirrors before she got out of her car. When she got out, she could have scanned again—not nervously, though. She could have used controlled, good eye contact with anyone in her environment, holding her gaze long enough to be able to notice behavioral anomalies or to be able to report identifiable features to law enforcement later.



In the video lesson, you will learn, if you're already on the ground and being attacked, how to protect critical areas—your head, spine, and vital organs in your abdomen—with turtling action. This is done in the context of the golden move to limit the damage you take.

Every violent action has four elements:

- you (your mind set, your skill level, your awareness, and how startled you are);
- the threat (all the things that factor in to his or her choice to commit this action);
- the environment (good lighting, poor footing, isolated or crowded?); and
- luck (a specific person or people targeted at a specific moment).

- ⦿ As she scanned, she could have looked at the natural lines of drift. Human movement instinctively drifts toward paths of least resistance. Just as Sarah will take a path free of obstacles from her car to her front door, a predator will set up along the natural lines of drift to have easy access to prey.
- ⦿ And Sarah could have understood that her neighborhood is a habitual area—familiar terrain—so she’s naturally less inclined to be engaged in active situational awareness. Humans are such unconsciously patterned creatures that although Sarah was on alert when she left her friend’s apartment, coming back to her anchor point and habitual area, she’s only thinking about getting in the house, not authentically scanning for potential threats.
- ⦿ To change this for her, she needed to understand how natural lines of drift, anchor points, and habitual areas could be used against her by a hunting predator. With an uptick in her situational awareness, walking with confidence, and positive eye contact, she could have presented herself as a potentially high-risk target—and that means less reward for a resource predator.
- ⦿ Because the resource predator uses violence to gain resources, we can use proxemics, natural lines of drift, anchor points, and habitual areas to increase our awareness and opportunity for avoidance.

Predators understand camouflage and sometimes dress or act to blend in with everyone else so they won't stand out. The good thing is that you have this ability, too. You already use camouflage, perhaps without understanding it as camouflage: If you wear an evening gown to a sports bar, you're going to stand out, but if you grab a pair of jeans and a casual shirt, you'll blend right in.

Take the things you do automatically, such as dress for work versus the gym, and pay attention to how other people do this as well. Look for discrepancies and then be curious about the anomaly.

Self-defense should make your life better, not make you more paranoid. You just need to get conscious.



PROCESS PREDATORS

- ⦿ For the process predator, the violence isn't a tool used to take possession of targeted resources; the violence is the goal. With violence as the endgame, a process predator will use an additional set of tools to intentionally develop an opportunity for the violence to play out.
- ⦿ A serial rapist in prison said that one of the easiest ways to get an average, nice girl into the car with him after he'd hit on her at a bar was to say, "Oh, guess I misjudged you. I thought you were one of the good ones—not like all those stuck-up bitches who think they're too good for everyone. I just wanted to get a cup of coffee; you know, get away from the meat market and get to know you..." It didn't work every time, but it did work.
- ⦿ In this situation, the more you use socially appropriate phrases, such as "no thank you" and "maybe another time," the more you give the process predator something to work with. If the predator offers to help you load your groceries into your car and you say no and then he offers again and, afraid of being rude, you acquiesce, he knows that you are well and deeply trained to be polite, even against your better judgement.
- ⦿ Your socially programmed behaviors become his tools, and the more he can direct your behavior inside the rules of polite society, the more you pass his victim interview. In Sarah's situation, most of the victim interview happened from a distance and by observation. A process predator's interview may start the same way—from a distance, watching and evaluating—but it can also involve direct contact with the potential target.

The personal zone is a distance about an arm's length between two people that's reserved for humans who know each other pretty well.

- ⦿ If you can realize that you're being interviewed, set a hard boundary, telling the predator to leave and that if he or she doesn't, you're going to scream and call for help. In this way, you can interrupt the interview with a predator test: Set a boundary and gauge the predator's response.
- ⦿ Most good people with decent social skills would see your refusal to, for example, go out for coffee with a stranger as a message and take the hint, leaving you alone. But a process predator would do the opposite, passing the litmus test for a potential predator. A process predator knows how to use the standard social rules for human decency and manipulate them to his or her advantage..

Resources

Harari, *Sapiens*.

Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are your natural environments and the camouflage you use to blend in?
- 2 Can you think of a time when you felt self-conscious because of how you were dressed? Why? Had you lost your camouflage?
- 3 What are your personal special boundaries, and what kinds of situations set off your radar?

SOCIAL CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

LESSON 10

Social violence is an evolution of some sort of conflict and follows specific unwritten rules. And if most violence follows specific rules and patterns, it is predictable. If it's predictable, it can be avoided. When it goes physical, no one wins; even the socially declared winner loses.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

- ⦿ Is how you breathe interfering with your early warning system? Did you know that was even possible? And did you know that learning how to regulate your breathing not only has overall health benefits but can also help you understand the mind-set of a potential threat?
- ⦿ There are very few constants in the chaos of a violent encounter, but one of them is that there are four elements in every violent encounter or criminal event: you, the threat, the environment, and luck. The you that will be responding to an ambush or threat is not the you that you are right now. Your problem-solving skills are still working, and your fine motor skills are online. Both functions disintegrate when your survival stress response kicks in and your body responds to the data signaling an attack.
- ⦿ When you hit the survival stress response, you are in fight/flight/freeze mode. In fight-or-flight mode, humans breathe in short, rapid, pulsing breaths, like a sprinter. This breathing pattern helps you in the short-term burst required for the run or the fight.
- ⦿ Breathe shallowly enough and eventually you're holding your breath altogether. This is a potential positive if you need to be invisible, such as during a freeze response. When you breathe, you move a little, and a predator's eyes are naturally drawn to movement.

There is a tactical breathing exercise in the video lesson. You can do the exercise seated as long as you don't collapse your spine. If you have trouble keeping your spine nice and long, stand or lay flat on your back until you get this down.

If this is the first time you have deliberately managed your breathing, start slow so you don't freak out your sympathetic nervous system and cause the opposite result.

Here are some training options:

- Start with an inhale through your nose and hold for a heartbeat; then, exhale through your mouth. Take a break for three to five seconds and then repeat for three to five reps.
- Then, add counting to keep your breath slow: Inhale to a count of four and exhale for four seconds.
- If that gets pretty easy, then add the four-count hold: Inhale for four seconds, hold for four, and exhale for four.
- Finally, inhale and exhale through the nose, with your mouth closed through the whole process.

If you practice this regularly for about two to three weeks, you will get a ton of additional benefits. It will also train your system to respond positively when you need it.



- ⦿ The flip side of this is also true. If you are not under threat and you breathe in short, rapid, shallow breaths, you can activate the survival stress response, and that gets the adrenaline cocktail pumping into your bloodstream.
- ⦿ You don't get any smarter in this state. And if you are faced with the high-speed problem-solving reality of escalating conflict or violence, you want to be very smart. This means that you have to tell your body that there is no need to freak out yet. And you can train for this with tactical breathing: slow, deep diaphragmatic breaths. This is the paced breathing of a long-distance runner or an opera singer.
- ⦿ Tactical breathing originates from mindfulness traditions and has a long history of proving to be particularly effective. It works because breathing in slow, deep, controlled breaths creates a signal that all is well. It helps mitigate the side effects of adrenalization and keeps your thinking self accessible, your vision and auditory acuity on deck, and your fine motor skills more viable.
- ⦿ With practice, tactical breathing can positively impact the sympathetic nervous system in just a few breaths. Work with this enough and even the first breath in the routine can begin to de-escalate the rising tide of your survival stress response activation.
- ⦿ Tactical breathing is almost as good as a magic wand for stress, anxiety, and worry. It uses the same mechanisms as the survival stress response, just not as severe.
- ⦿ If you see someone else working this skill, then you know two things: This person is working to mitigate the impact of adrenalization (his or her survival stress response has been activated), and he or she knows that tactical breathing works.
- ⦿ And you should be wondering why this person knows, and at the minimum, understand that he or she has learned how to tamp down the impact of the survival stress response. Somehow this person developed a need for this skill.
- ⦿ Humans who are comfortable with violence are one subset who have figured this out. And if you know what tactical breathing means when you see it, they can spot it in you as well. That's not a good or bad thing necessarily—just something to remember. It's one of those things you give away when someone is watching you, like a tell in poker.

- The more you can use your breathing to mitigate adrenalization, the more you can sense when you shift into survival stress response breathing. Because the short, rapid breaths in the survival stress response are instinctual, it serves as an early warning system. When you notice it, look up and around. Is there an environmental cue you are reacting to? It could be just something stressful you are thinking about, but it could be that something in your environment is triggering your subconscious to be alert.
- Survival stress response breathing is one of your early warning systems, but you have other ones, and some of these warning systems are dictated by social rules running as subconsciously as the rules governing your rate of respiration.
- Take the monkey dance, for example. The classic version is two guys in a bar. It starts with their arms flaring, chins jutting, and chests out; using loud voices; and being up on balls of their feet. Then, it progresses to a more verbal situation with gestures and shoving from both sides and then to easy-to-read hard punches. Someone pulls them apart, and they both get to say something like this: “That guy’s lucky you stepped in; I would’ve destroyed him.” And their egos get to stay intact.




- ⦿ This monkey dance is no different than a tiny kitten's encounter with great big dog: "Hey, look at me! I'm big and scary. You don't want to tangle with me." When it works, this is the end of it. Unfortunately, humans can be stupid, and our drive to prove ourselves can escalate into high levels of violence. This can make it hard to distinguish between the asocial violence of process and resource predators and social violence encounters.

THE RANGE OF SOCIAL VIOLENCE

- ⦿ Asocial violence was unpacked in the previous lesson, and you learned about how asocial violence works on a unique metric: You are either a resource or a toy. Now let's unpack the range of social violence so you have the tools for assessing the difference.
- ⦿ One of the problems with the notion of social violence is humans tend to think we have evolved beyond our need to beat our chest in dominance displays—that we are too sophisticated a species for it. Or we think it's just something Neanderthal males get into. But the truth is that we all do this.
- ⦿ Social conflict follows a specific set of rules, and those rules are designed to control the level of conflict and violence to keep it contained. Like the two guys in the bar, there's an expectation of intervention. There are many witnesses, and someone may eventually step in and pull the people apart. The rules shift based on the circumstances.
- ⦿ You've learned about process and resource predators and how the social rules become a useful tool for predators to manipulate. The good news is that asocial predation represents a very small percentage of violence in our society. And by using the predator test you were introduced to in the previous lesson, you can shift gears from interacting by the social rules of polite society to action better suited for a process predator sniffing out the hunt.
- ⦿ You know these social rules. You were raised in them. You may be unconsciously competent, but—just like becoming more consciously aware of how proxemics are used—you need to bring up your conscious awareness around your natural ability for reading cues that signal escalating social conflict and violence.

- ⦿ One significant benchmark in identifying social versus asocial patterns in violence is whether or not there are witnesses present. Typically, with asocial violence, predators don't want a lot of witnesses, particularly with process predation. The predator wants to have you alone so he or she can play with you—because you are seen as a toy—until he or she gets bored.
- ⦿ The monkey dance is designed to impress the other primates in the troop; it doesn't do much good if no one is watching. Social violence and conflict, by nature, needs an audience. And in specific types of goals or motivators, the audience participates. These are called group monkey dances, and there are a few different kinds.
 - The first one is a bonding exercise. In bonding, we all have to play; it ensures that no one will break away and rat out. We all egg the cars, say mean things to the overweight kid, or stab the target.
 - Boundary setting is another motivation for group violence and, as an example, can reflect violations of a physical boundary, such as gang members running business in rival territory.
 - This can cross over into betrayal. If you sleep with someone's girlfriend, you may be dealing not only with her angry boyfriend, but with all of his friends as well.
 - Group violence correcting for betrayal can be brutal when the stakes are high and can bleed over into another type of group monkey dance: the educational beatdown. Educational beatdowns run on a spectrum, from a parent lightly spanking a three-year-old for throwing food across the kitchen to three or four enforcers from a gang brutally beating a young kid for trying to get out of the gang. Educational beatdowns aren't always just an education for the specific target; sometimes they're more for everyone else.
 - The last one is the status-seeking show. As a group monkey dance, it's all about the audience. The instigation of conflict or the use of violence is intended to raise the status of the person who is stirring the pot.

A high-angle, slightly blurred photograph of a crowded shopping mall. In the foreground, several escalators with metal handrails and glass sides are visible, with people moving up and down. The background is filled with a large number of people walking on the mall's floor, some carrying shopping bags. The overall atmosphere is one of a busy, public space.

The affordances between social and asocial violence are qualitatively different. The soft, indirect, socially appropriate boundary setting will be signals to a process predator to move forward and deepen the game. When good boundary setting isn't working, it's time to pay attention.

PLACES WHERE VIOLENCE HAPPENS

- ⊙ There are four primary places where violence happens:
 - where young men gather in groups (sports games, street corners, bars, public protests);
 - where people go to get their minds altered (bars, restaurants serving alcohol, places people gather to get high);
 - where boundaries are in question (unstable office environments, gang territory, countries at war); and
 - where you don't know the rules (anyplace where you are new to the group, location, or region).
- ⊙ This does not mean that you should never go out for a drink at the local pub or to concerts or travel. Instead, this information should help you know when you need to be a little more conscious of your surroundings and the people in them.
- ⊙ Daily life is full of opportunities to practice this. Look for normal and abnormal behavior patterns. Identify whether or not the four indicators are, or may be, present. When you're out, think about them and then think about the situation, because if you are already there when you notice one of the indicators, then you can't really avoid it. Your options now fall into the escape, evasion, and de-escalation categories—the subjects of upcoming lessons.

Further Practice

Work on your tactical breathing. Once you get comfortable with it and have created a practice of it, you'll be able to use just one or two breaths to relax, destress, and clear your head. It's a fantastic stress and anger management tool.

Create your own victim profile. Use the six elements in the context of violence from lesson 8—who, where, selection, isolation, psychological domination, and physical domination for control—to figure out what you might be targeted for. The threat is going for a specific goal and to control for specific parameters. We all have a victim profile, and it changes over time.

Watch the people in your world. Identify their proxemics (lesson 9) and how they use geography: Where are their anchor points? What are the habitual areas in your community? What are the normal patterns of behavior in your habitual areas? What's abnormal? This is a great way to train your awareness so it can operate in the background while you enjoy your life.

Resources

Harari, *Sapiens*.

Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are common locations in your city or community where young men gather in groups? Are they also common ground for getting minds altered?
- 2 What are some of the ideological territories in dispute in your community or among your friends/colleagues? How does this create the potential for conflict?

ESCAPE AND EVASION

LESSON 11

The only way to permanently avoid all human conflict and violence is by permanently avoiding all humans. Self-defense should make your life better, not limit your experiences by increasing your state of fear. And while avoidance is the highest order, if we can't avoid, our next-best option is to leave—the industry language for which is escape and evasion. For personal safety, escape and evasion can give us tools for low-level events, such as getting everyone back to the car at a large public venue with thousands of other humans, and high-level threats, such as escaping a burning building or running from a kidnapper.

SURVEYING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- ⦿ Let's unpack the four elements present in every violent encounter and escalating conflict—you (the target), the threat, the environment, and luck—specifically as they relate to escape and evasion.
- The you in a violent encounter will be hopped up on the adrenaline cocktail associated with the survival stress response. This version of you is the one who is kind of clumsy and not the sharpest crayon in the box when it comes to decision making. This you could be terrified, hurt, or angry—or all three at once.
- The threat is the other human factor in this equation, and you've already been exposed to information that can help you assess what might be happening. Never assume that you are certain about his or her mind-set, though; this assumption dangerously narrows your affordances.
- Think about the environment you're in at this moment. How does your environment change if you're in a restaurant, on an icy sidewalk, or on the third floor of a crowded shopping mall? Tables, chairs, corners, blocked sight lines, other people, exits, and lighting are all factors in the environment that will influence what happens and the decisions you can—and need—to make.

- Luck can be a hard one to accept. Humans want to believe we can control enough things to guarantee our safety and security. It's why science is driven to better predict earthquakes and where a hurricane will make landfall. Unfortunately, we don't get to control everything. And although all four elements are interconnected, luck and environment are particularly intertwined. You may be in a familiar environment, but as luck would have it, someone left a large, hardbound book nearby that you can use as an improvised weapon. If you happened to be in this familiar environment two days earlier, that book wouldn't be there.



- ⦿ Look at what's around you right now. Tables and chairs may be a barrier, but they can also help you in numerous ways. A chair can become a tool for creating space between you and the threat, or it can be used as a weapon, as a distraction, or to make noise and get onlookers to notice your problem. A table can be used like the chair—a barrier you can put between you and the threat. If you can't immediately leave and hiding is an option, you could use it to hide under. This is called concealment.
- ⦿ Hiding provides temporary camouflage, but it doesn't provide cover, which is a term referencing something that can truly shield you from a bullet. In the average home or office, there are a few items that function as potential cover, including a safe, a freezer full of frozen items, a steel door, a concrete wall or room, and a refrigerator (sometimes).
- ⦿ The caliber of a weapon influences what can actually shield you from incoming rounds. A refrigerator works as cover for certain types of weapons, but not for others. At a point, you may have to make the decision to be on the move if you are in the unfortunate reality of taking fire.
- ⦿ Now that you know the difference between cover and concealment, you can use that information to inform the choices you make as you move.
- ⦿ There are additional aspects about environment and architecture that impact your efforts to escape. If you are in escape-and-evasion mode, you are running toward safety, not just away from potential danger. Being aware of how the architecture of your environment impacts your way out is definitely a plus, and it's pretty simple.
- Humans gather and move in centers and midlines of spaces. Get to perimeters for freer movement in crowds. If there isn't anyone else there—if you're moving quickly down an empty hallway, for example—the perimeter can still be a good place to be.
- Approaching an intersection or a bend in the hallway, slow down and go wide. This will give you a better sight line into the intersecting space. You'll also be easier to see to anyone in that intersecting space, so the circumstances will dictate whether or not that's a good thing. If you move down the opposite wall, you'll be hidden from view until you are much closer to the intersection, but you'll trade that for your own visibility.

- ⦿ Because people are a common factor when assessing the environment and your ability to get out and clear of danger, any training you do needs to take other humans into consideration.
- ⦿ Getting out to the perimeter of a crowded space for easier access through a throng of humans gets us back to goals and principles.
 - If your goal is escape and evade, you need to be running toward safety, not just away from danger. If you're just running away from danger, this could get you trapped in a dead end rather than out and free.
 - Using the void—where structure is completely absent—as a training principle provides a tremendous tactical advantage as you escape toward safety. To make this happen, a few technical skills will be beneficial. To this end, you will learn some clearing drills in the video lesson.



The clearing drills in the video lesson are physical, so if you know you need to warm up, take a few minutes and do so.

If you are working solo, you can get a general feel for the body movements of the clearing drills, but you are strongly encouraged to work with a real body at some point. Really learning how to manage a body is hard to do without the body.

ESCAPING AN AGGRESSIVE DOG

- ⦿ How do you get away from a dog that is coming after you? The answer is part of our escape-and-evasion toolbox.
- ⦿ To you, the dog is seen as the threat, but the dog isn't coming after you because he or she is angry or mean-spirited. Like us, our canine friend is a natural predator, and a jogger or bicyclist's behavior looks like prey behavior. And if you're in the dog's vicinity, you may have crossed one of Fido's territorial markers so he sees you as the threat, and it's his job to protect everyone from you.



Retired canine officer Chris Green of Invictus Defense Academy in Portland, Oregon, helped provide information on how to work with a potential dog threat.

- ⦿ Safely evading an advancing aggressive dog starts by recognizing that you are both part of the same pack. Your body language and tone of voice are your primary methods of communication, and you need to address Rex like the alpha of the pack—not as an underling and absolutely not like prey.
- ⦿ The video lesson provides specific form, but in general, you want to turn toward the dog with your posture out. Make eye contact and use a commanding voice to growl. Hold your position until the dog backs down. When the dog backs up, you encroach one or two steps. Exit, maintaining eye contact until a safe distance is created.
- ⦿ If this is a skill you think you'll need, practice a few times so you're comfortable creating the necessary body posture and tone of voice. Use the camera on your phone to take a video of yourself going through the steps and see if you look sufficiently alpha.

ESCAPING THE TRUNK OF A CAR

- ⦿ What if you are thrown in the trunk of someone's car?
- ⦿ In September of 2001, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration mandated that all vehicles be manufactured with an internal safety latch allowing someone trapped inside a trunk to release him- or herself.
- ⦿ If the vehicle is stationary and you are inside, look for this latch. Find it in your own vehicle and play with it so you know how it works. Make sure your kids can operate this as well; there are multiple counts of children playing and being inadvertently trapped in the trunk of a car.
- ⦿ If the vehicle is moving and you are inside, mark the time of the trip by counting, mark the number of stops the vehicle makes, try to remember any turns that are made, and note any sounds (such as gravel roads, highway noises, and trains). This information helps you keep a point of reference so when you are able to escape, you have something to work with. It won't be accurate, but it will be helpful.

- ⦿ Training for this can be a game. When you're a passenger, close your eyes and play with these skills. Training kids can be even more fun; pretending to be superheroes or any action-adventure hero they admire gives them a nonthreatening way to develop life-saving skills.

The biggest gift you can give yourself and your loved ones is awareness. Share what you are learning with people close to you and get out there and enjoy life. The risks to our safety can be in our own neighborhoods just as easily as there are risks in giant crowds and obscure tourist locations. Be safe out there.

Resources

Captive Audience: Abduction Prevention, Captivity Survival Training, and Recovery Services, <http://captivityprevention.com/>.
Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Look around your specific environment. What would be concealment, and what would serve as cover?
- 2 What are some creative ways you can practice escape and evasion skills? For example, you could use something like Chinese fire drills to practice quickly clearing your seatbelt and exiting the vehicle.

HOW AND WHY CONFLICT ESCALATES TO VIOLENCE

LESSON 12

Learning how and why conflict escalates to violence and what drives violence into high levels of force is central to your self-defense. This means the next few lessons won't be as physical as previous ones have been. But this doesn't mean that they won't be challenging. In fact, the information may challenge a few deeply ingrained belief systems. The next few lessons are the cornerstone of your self-defense skills.

TALKING ABOUT CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

- ⦿ When we believe something is bad or wrong, the possibility for productive dialogue and discovery evaporates. So, instead, we talk about *talking about* violence and conflict. In fact, we talk about talking about it a lot, but we're not actually coming up with solutions because we're unwilling to look at conflict and violence through a neutral lens.
- ⦿ If we can talk about something, we can begin to understand it, and if we can understand it, we can create viable solutions.
- ⦿ If you want the skills to effectively confront a violent encounter, you'll first need to accept the realities around conflict and violence. If you deny reality, you can't for control it. If your affordances are so narrow you refuse to acknowledge what is happening around you, you will live perpetually as a potential victim.

The highest order of success in self-defense is avoidance. If you can't avoid, leave; if you can't leave, de-escalate. The first three best choices are nonviolent and require awareness, skill, and the ability to manage your own internal dialogue.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

- ⊙ A theory of human psychology known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs was introduced by Abraham Maslow in the early 1940s and is useful as a model for human behavior. Maslow's basic premise says that this is how humans are wired:
 - At the base are our fundamental survival needs. This is raw survival: Are you drowning? Is there a gun pressed to your temple? The premise is that if these primal survival needs are in question, nothing else on the pyramid matters.
 - The next layer up is safety and security. This indicates needs for food, clothing, and shelter. You're not facing down imminent death, but if you can't provide shelter and food, you're staring at the first tier again.
 - The next two tiers in the middle reflect the human being's powerful social needs. First, we need to know that we belong to a group. Humans are fundamentally tribal.
 - Once we're pretty sure we belong, then we need to know where we fit in the power structure of the tribe, which relates to Maslow's "esteem" level.
 - At the top, using Maslow's language, we get to experience "self-actualization." With all the other business taken care of, we can begin to pursue personal goals. We can create things that advance culture and society; we can be a philosopher or an artist.
- ⊙ Using Maslow's pyramid as a model, we gain a way to talk about conflict and violence from a more objective perspective.
- ⊙ For example, the majority of conflict and violence experienced by most humans is dictated by the belonging and esteem needs. And we know that humans generally respond first to the lowest tier in the pyramid from which we're attacked.
- ⊙ So, if we look at the two social tiers—belonging and esteem—and you are being threatened at both levels, you'll respond to the threat that challenges your right to be in the tribe long before you will address the threat challenging your value.



- It's easy to see this if we go farther down the pyramid and compare survival and security. If you are actively drowning, you're probably not spending a whole lot of time thinking about where you're going to find shelter for tomorrow.
- Critical to self-defense, this entire model is seen by most people through a strictly social paradigm. If you're stuck in a social mind-set, you'll see a drowning person and unconsciously assume that he or she sees you as a person as well. But that's going to get you in trouble because the drowning person only sees you as a flotation device. You have to be able to acknowledge that reality if you're going to survive your efforts to save him or her.
- If someone grabs a beer bottle off the bar and swings for your head, if you can only see that person as someone's precious child, it's going to be substantially more difficult for you to cause the necessary damage to secure your own safety.
- If we overlay an asocial paradigm, everything changes. What will work to avoid and de-escalate social conflict will not only backfire in an asocial dynamic, but your socially driven strategies will likely be used as a tool to the asocial predator's advantage.

- ⦿ Don't let that seem too ominous. Most conflict and violence happens in the two social tiers—belonging and esteem—and the potential of authentic sociopathic individuals out there hunting is a tiny percentage.
- ⦿ And because our ancestors solved most of our survival, safety, and security needs thousands of years ago with the onset of the agrarian societies, as a species we don't spend much time in those bottom two struggles.
- ⦿ Interestingly, we don't spend as much time as we could up in Maslow's self-actualization, either. Because humans are, fundamentally, social primates, our survival requires that we care deeply about belonging. We're missing the long talons, strong jaws, strength, power, speed, keen eyesight, and furry coat necessary for a predator to survive in the wild. On our own, we die.
- ⦿ We also know that in complete isolation, our psychological and neurological processing shifts in ways that aren't the healthiest. And because your survival depends on being allowed to hang out with your tribe, acceptance and belonging are much more important than your overall status in the tribe.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

- ⦿ If making sure you don't get kicked out of your tribe is critical to your survival, at first glance social conflict and violence don't make much sense. Why risk it?
- ⦿ Our relationship with conflict has evolved alongside agricultural and industrial advancements. Social conflict and violence evolved as a tribal mechanism, and in the span of human history, it's only been recently that we have branched out and crossed tribal lines with socially violent action.
- ⦿ Ten thousand years ago, humans began to settle into villages and farming. For roughly the 160,000 years prior, we weren't too worried about going after other tribes because we were too busy working on our own little group's survival.
- ⦿ When we settled down and started storing resources, such as food, water, and fuel, someone had an idea: "Why do I have to work so hard? I'll just kill you and take all your stuff, and anyone I missed, I'll just make them

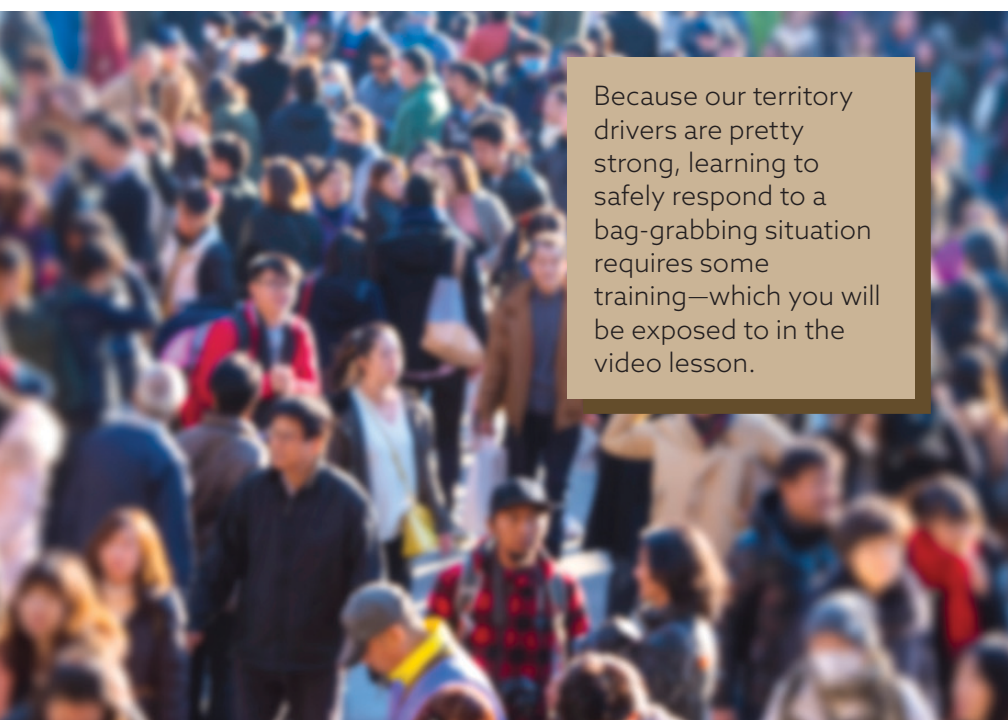
slaves, making my workload even lighter.” And if we look at violence as it occurs inside a specific tribal unit, social conflict and violence serve as regulatory functions.

- ⦿ Through social conflict and violence, we establish and maintain positions of status and hierarchy and create and maintain social networks, which speaks to membership in the overall tribe as well as membership in tribal subgroups. We use violence and conflict to enforce the mores of the tribe and to set and reinforce territorial boundaries—which isn’t always about land and possessions. It can relate to relationships as well.
- ⦿ For us to survive, we need the group. If we are going to survive, the group has to survive, and for the group to survive, it must have a coherent identity. Conflict is a key element in this. We have to know who we are—as a collective—and it has to mean something. The stronger the identity of the group, the greater the chances of survival.
- ⦿ We use conflict and violence to police members of our own tribe so that our tribe remains unified. This unified state ensures a strong identity, and that identity makes us feel like our tribe will survive through the ages. At the global level, we go to war over these issues; at the individual level, we will disrupt even our own families for them.
- ⦿ Tribal identity is fundamental to identifying potential conflict and to de-escalating conflict before it reaches violence. Once you understand this, you can see it everywhere and begin to apply prevention tactics in a way that will improve your life on a regular and daily basis.

ASOCIAL VIOLENCE

- ⦿ Applying this to self-defense means that we need to look again at asocial violence. Conflict outside our tribes is typically about resources, such as territory. But originally, asocial violence was outside our own species.
- ⦿ Asocial violence was—and still is—a hunting behavior. Eventually, we established kinship lines and began to consider other tribes as other species. If we hunted for food, we were killing. This is a violent action. But as a species, we didn’t have a problem with it. If we are invaded by dangerous animals, we will also engage in some form of violence.

- ⦿ When the species is the same, there is conquest and raiding for resources. The Vikings had no problem killing even women and children on raids into new territory because they were after resources.
- ⦿ Sorting human behavior into categories, such as social and asocial, helps us wrap our minds around the complexity of human motivation and behavior. Taking this over into self-defense, it's vital to also understand that asocial and social actions are often intertwined.
- ⦿ When a criminal grabs your bag, it is asocial in the goal because it is interspecies resource violence. It is social because it follows tribal rules: In many purse snatchings, the victim doesn't get hurt, or if there is injury, it isn't life threatening. The snatcher is just after your stuff. And your stuff isn't nearly as important as you are.
- ⦿ But responding to this kind of violence tends to trigger our territory instincts that give rise to the social tiers in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The resource goal is going to have a broad affordance for violence, while the social goal of protecting the territory of the bag will have less. The purse snatcher may be willing to kill you for your bag; are you willing to do the same to keep it?



Because our territory drivers are pretty strong, learning to safely respond to a bag-grabbing situation requires some training—which you will be exposed to in the video lesson.

ACCESSING YOUR ABILITY TO USE VIOLENCE

- ⊙ How do we access our natural apex-level-predator capacity for violent action when we have been socially programmed that this is seriously bad and wrong? There are four ways people access their ability to use violence:
1. **Extreme emotion.** Under profound emotional duress, we can do some pretty violent things. Even our legal system recognizes this; there are at least a few jurisdictions in the United States that allow a crime of passion defense in criminal proceedings.
 2. **Social conditioning.** You have been marinating in your culture's rules and mores since you were born. "Don't hit your sister"; "don't bite your brother." The reverse works as well. If you grow up in a community that uses violence as a rite of passage or a means of establishing respect, there will be a degree of social programming permitting you to see this kind of violence as permissible. And as a result, you use it if you need to.
 3. **Operant conditioning.** This is a behavioral psychology construct. Sometimes operant conditioning is a natural event, but often it is intentionally utilized to create specific behavioral changes. Operant conditioning creates a stimulus-response learning event that anchors fast and hard. For example, you usually only have to touch a hot stove once before you learn to avoid it.
 4. **Otherring.** If you can make another person distinctly different—even convince yourself that the other person is not really human, not part of your tribe or your kinship group—then you can go into hunting mode much more easily. And otherring tends to run on a scale. The deeper you can "other," the more violence you can use. For most people, otherring is a skill; it has to be learned. For a few people, who we tend to call sociopaths or people with antisocial personality disorder, this is the natural way to see the world. The good news about otherring is that if it's a learned skill, then we can also learn how not to be othered, reducing the chance for conflict and violence to escalate.

When nations go to war, social campaigns are launched to encourage a national state of othering. It's much easier to fire missiles into the den of rabid, dangerous animals than an encampment of men and women who are mothers, sons, brothers, and fathers.



The more you understand how the human animal works and responds and the more you get in touch with the primitive nature of being human, the more three things become available to you:

- 1 the ability to ascertain if the circumstances are ripe for conflict or violence;
- 2 what might be contributing to someone's agitation; and
- 3 what your personal contribution is to the escalating dynamic.

None of these three things will be accessible if you hold conflict and violence as aberrations. All of nature functions within conflict and violence, and as much as we'd like to believe otherwise, humans are right in the middle of it.

If we deny this reality, we can't have the dialogue necessary to understand and manage the probability of human violence.

Resources

Harari, *Sapiens*.

Miller, *Conflict Communication*.

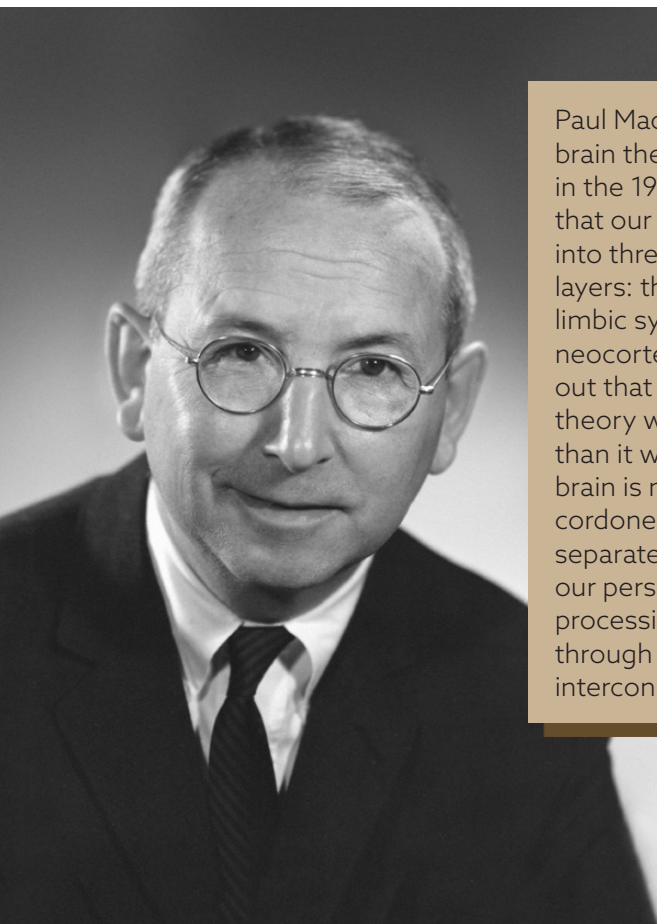
Questions to consider

- 1 What are situations in which you believe conflict/violence are wrong? When do you feel it could be appropriate?
- 2 What are some subtle ways you might "other" people on a daily basis?

DE-ESCALATING YOUR MONKEY BRAIN

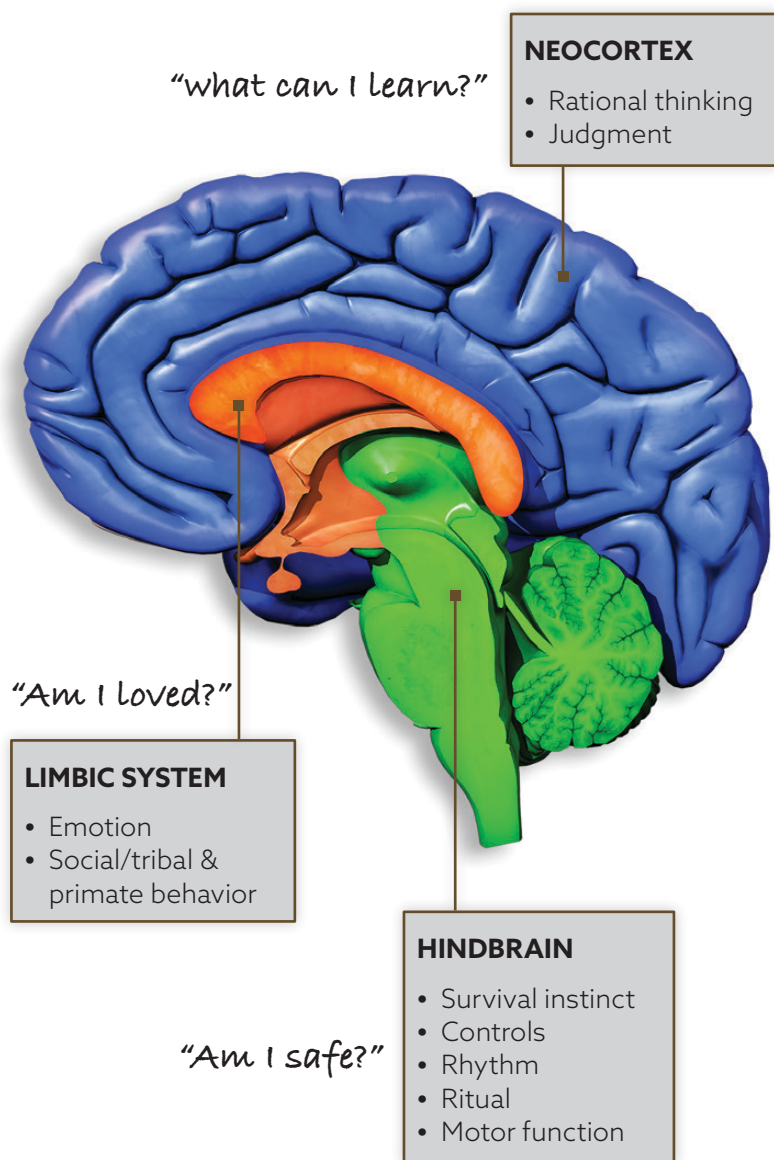
LESSON 13

Our territorial drivers can be so strong that we will engage in illogical behavior. We get involved in a monkey dance—a dance fueled by one or more of the goals behind social conflict that you learned about in the previous lesson: status, territory, membership, and protocols (i.e., the rules of engagement). Why do we do this?




Paul MacLean's triune brain theory, introduced in the 1960s, suggests that our brain is divided into three distinct layers: the hindbrain, the limbic system, and the neocortex. But it turns out that MacLean's theory was more wrong than it was right. Our brain is not actually cordoned off into three separate units; instead, our personal central processing unit functions through a vast array of interconnectivity.

THE TRIUNE BRAIN



YOUR LIZARD BRAIN

- ⦿ The lizard's job is to keep you alive. That's the goal: survival. It will reach back into the primitive evolutionary designs tucked into your DNA; it will reach up into your limbic system and activate the fight/flight/freeze decision tree.
- ⦿ In emergencies, it has the power to hijack the other levels of the brain and is partially responsible for the survival stress response. It is prelingual, meaning that this part of your brain doesn't respond to the symbolic meaning in spoken or written language. But it does work with ritual and rhythm.



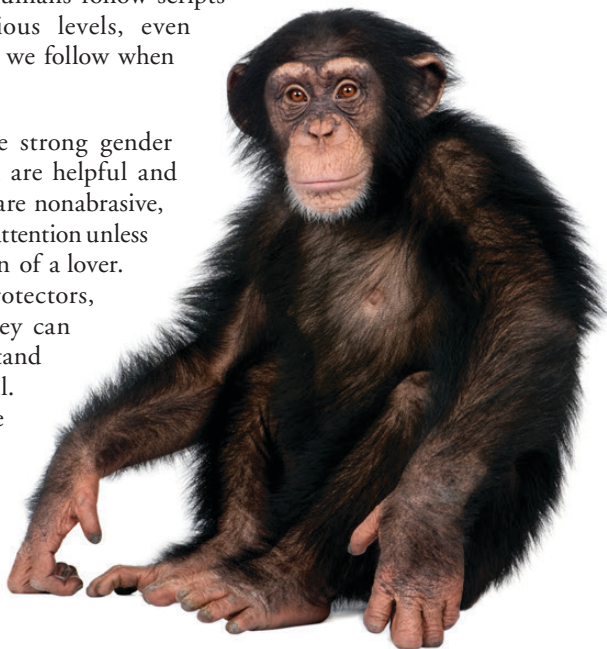
It's not uncommon to see people in a high state of distress—such as natural disaster victims and survivors of mass shooting events—rocking, pacing, or humming quietly to themselves. These ritualized actions are the lizard brain's way of helping to manage the biochemistry pulsing through the body, and generally it's best not to interrupt it.

- ◉ Many people have never met their lizard brain; our ancestors solved most of our survival problems a long time ago. But if you haven't met your lizard, you may not recognize it when it invites itself to the party—which means you won't know how to handle it.
- ◉ And humans like evidence. Without evidence of your lizard, it's hard to believe you really have one, and it's even harder to believe other people have one. This state of denial will make it profoundly difficult to understand the tactics necessary for managing something you may not believe exists.
- ◉ Watch yourself the next time you are in a significant amount of stress. Chances are you have your own rituals and rhythmic patterns you use to self-soothe. The instinct to develop these has been active since you were an infant—and it's still there. The self-soothing actions are nonverbal and often ritualistic, and they can help a lizard brain quiet itself so other functions are more accessible.

YOUR MONKEY BRAIN

- ◉ Loosely associated with your limbic system, the monkey brain is where human social and emotional needs drive our behavior. There's a degree of crossover to survival here; that whole business about "for you to survive, your tribe has to survive" lives here and, with it, the part of the limbic system that is assigned to reading cues for activating the survival stress response. So, the monkey brain's goal is social survival.
- ◉ Decisions here are made on social cues and subconscious reads of environmental cues. Most of this happens below conscious, logic-driven thought; however, the monkey is very good at convincing the rest of you that it's the smartest one of the bunch. These subconscious reads are interpreted through both social and emotional lenses, which shift how your affordances will apply to your situation.
- ◉ Interestingly, the monkey does not seem to know the difference between humiliation and death—probably because humiliation means being ostracized, and to the monkey brain, being all alone doesn't bode well for you.

- ⦿ Because our ancestors solved most of those pesky survival and security needs, we live most of our lives as social creatures. As a result, most conflicts happen at this level.
- ⦿ Have you ever seen a couple of toddlers play together? It's not long before someone's crying, stealing a toy, or whacking someone over the head. A few decades of social conditioning and we have just gotten more sophisticated in our conflict management. But in many ways, we're really still just toddlers.
- ⦿ And that's why we need the protocols and patterns of punishment to keep us behaving inside the lines of cultural expectation. And because we live most of our lives in social networks, the monkey brain has grown particularly powerful, and most of that power resides in the monkey's subconscious scripts, which keep our inner toddler in check and help us be accepted by members of our various tribes, such as our families, coworkers, and social networks.
- ⦿ This may be evolutionary as part of our need to preserve the tribe. Humans follow scripts at deeply subconscious levels, even down to the patterns we follow when we're walking.
- ⦿ The scripts can have strong gender connections: Women are helpful and kind, avoid conflict, are nonabrasive, and don't draw undue attention unless courting the attention of a lover. Men are strong, protectors, and unemotional; they can fix things and understand all things mechanical. These scripts are powerful and violate intelligent logic when objectively evaluated, but they will still control our decisions.



- ⊙ This makes the monkey sound bad. But it isn't. Our ability to live in large groups, fall in love, and enjoy the accomplishments of our children are all the product of our monkey brain.
- ⊙ But when it comes to conflict and violence, it often causes more problems than it solves. And that's why we have the human brain.

YOUR HUMAN BRAIN

- ⊙ The human brain's goal is to solve puzzles and create new things. It deals with concrete problems strategically and combines intelligence and experience into what we call wisdom. It is also subordinate to the other two brains.
- ⊙ Survival fear puts the lizard in charge while simultaneously tapping into the limbic system. Social fear puts the monkey in charge. The human brain is slow by comparison; all that neurological processing takes time, and our other programs run on autopilot.
- ⊙ The monkey and the lizard are assigned to manage our survival stress response, and that means the human brain must be trained to maintain control under stress. Without training, the human brain tends to acquiesce control to the other two. This level of training requires repeated experience with authentic stress-inducing situations to create an inoculation effect against the survival stress response's impact on your cognitive abilities.
- ⊙ Your monkey brain will take over in intense conflict, such as active shooter events, but it will also try to take over in less intense conflict, such as office politics or family disagreements. What kind of training keeps your human brain online? What can we do to keep these kinds of situations from devolving into unnecessary chaos?
- ⊙ We need to train in how to de-escalate our own monkey brains. We need to learn how to read the behavioral tells, or telegraphs, that differentiate a threat display and a preattack cue. And we need to get the human brain and the monkey brain to work together. That's what all that complex neurobiology is designed for.

HOW TO DE-ESCALATE YOUR MONKEY BRAIN

- ⊙ The most important de-escalation skill for any event, under any circumstance, is to recognize when your monkey has hijacked you. Like a number of skills in self-defense, this is simple, but not always easy. The monkey brain is confident, and when it says, “I got this,” the human brain tends to believe that this declaration is accurate. So, we have to teach the human brain to know when the monkey’s “I got this” is just bravado.
- ⊙ You must recognize when your monkey brain is calling the shots. Here are a few indicators that your monkey brain is in charge:
 - any time you notice you are experiencing any strong emotion, particularly anger or frustration
 - if you default into labeling someone as an idiot
 - when you notice you really like someone, or dislike someone
 - if you were problem solving and all of sudden you are committed to proving you are right
 - if you start dismissing what someone is saying as he or she is speaking
- ⊙ Once you recognize you are in your monkey brain, you must de-escalate your monkey brain so your human brain can step in and assist. With your human brain involved, you can identify what the monkey problem is and, using that intel, help solve the problem. This is the human brain’s forte: learning, discovering, puzzle solving.
- ⊙ And on the social continuum of conflict to violence, if you can solve the puzzle before it goes physical, you are in the avoidance and de-escalation skill set that is our highest priority. The human brain may also be able to assess whether this is a social conflict dynamic or an asocial one; left only to the monkey, the events will always be interpreted through a social lens.
- ⊙ Recognizing you are in your monkey brain requires honesty. We live the majority of our lives in our monkey brain, so when conflict is brewing, the safe assumption is you are in your monkey brain. The worst thing

you can do is deny it to yourself. Instead, get your monkey brain and your human brain to work together by saying to yourself, “I’m probably in my monkey brain—and, no, it’s not helping.” Then, say something like this to the other person in the conflict: “Hang on a second; I need to take a breath.” Once you breathe and shake it off, say “Okay, I’m listening.”

- You can also use tactical breathing as part of your strategy for de-escalating yourself. Start with a training period of 10 to 14 days. Set a series of reminders to go off throughout the day, using an app on your smartphone. Setting 8 to 10 reminders in a day is ideal. When the reminder goes off, take 20 to 30 seconds and practice breathing in for four, holding for four, and releasing for four (and repeat). Then, any time you noticed feeling tense, irritated, or stressed, use tactical breathing to de-escalate your system.

HUMAN BRAIN-LEVEL CONFLICT

- Human brain-level conflict isn’t really conflict. When people are debating ideas or working their way through a complex problem with a give-and-take interchange, they are working on solving a puzzle. If both people stay in their human brain, they will be driven by curiosity, emotion, and a mutual desire to find the solution.
- At the human level, we don’t really have conflict, but we do have violence. Violence at the human level is asocial. With Maslow’s hierarchy in mind, this person is engaged in violent action at the self-actualized level. This is fun, and you are a toy. Violence is the goal, rather than a means to an end.
- All humans can “other” deeply enough to be asocial. The tricky piece in de-escalating asocial violence is that de-escalating yourself will be essential because you aren’t going to de-escalate the violent people. They aren’t running off emotional energy or drivers; they aren’t angry or betrayed. They are hunting. They will use your social scripts for de-escalation to their advantage.
- This means you need two sets of skills: the techniques to de-escalate social dynamics and the ability to read when it isn’t working. When it isn’t working, you have to be ready to get physical. That may be your only option.

- ⊙ Most conflict and violence the average person encounters is driven by the monkey brain and its goals. This means you can often avoid it altogether as long as you don't get hooked into the monkey dance. If you do get hooked, catch it and then de-escalate yourself by saying something like this: "Hey, sorry about that; I got a little angry. Let me reset. What were we working on?"
- ⊙ Whether you are hooked or not, asking yourself what the monkey problem is piques the human brain's curiosity, and a curious human brain is golden for conflict management. The human brain likes solving true puzzles, but the monkey brain makes it about membership, territory, status, or protocol transgressions. If someone is upset with you, wonder which of these is threatened:
 - **Protocols** can be as simple as a middle school kid sitting at the wrong lunch table or as egregious as violating chain of command in a military unit.
 - **Membership** might look like inserting yourself unbidden into a closed-door meeting, crashing a wedding, or becoming an apostate to your faith.
 - **Status** gets disrupted when an underling is promoted over the expected next person in line or a second child is born into an only-child home.
 - And while **territory** seems obvious, it can also be incredibly subtle.
- ⊙ If it's a monkey conflict, it will always be about one of these four.
- ⊙ Getting your monkey brain to trust your human brain is just a matter of practice—acknowledging you're in your monkey brain, de-escalating your own monkey brain, and inviting the human brain forward so it can identify which of the four social conflict problems needs solving.
- ⊙ Do this a few times and your monkey brain will happily create a partnership with the human brain. This is because the monkey is very competitive and hates to lose. Once it sees how adept the human brain is at winning—solving the conflict—it feels like a superpower.

Work on de-escalating your monkey brain and be on the lookout for the social scripts in your daily life. Not all of them are bad; they serve a purpose in our relationships. The key is to figure out whether or not they are helping.

As you learn to gain more control over your monkey brain's inclination to create and escalate conflict, it's important to remember that not everyone has learned to do this.

Facing down a potential threat, the possibility for avoidance, and de-escalation live in human brain skill sets. Keeping your human brain online can save your life.

Resources

Harari, *Sapiens*.

Miller, *Conflict Communication*.

Sapolsky, *Behave*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Can you identify some of the problematic scripts in your daily life? For example, do you recycle subtle arguments at home, such as whether toilet paper goes on the roll to unroll on top or underneath?
- 2 Can you recall a time you were embarrassed or worried about being humiliated? What were the physiological indicators you were in a survival stress response? Remember that the monkey brain sees humiliation as equal to the risk of death.

WHEN AND HOW TO DE-ESCALATE THREATS

LESSON 14

People's behavior can tell us what their intentions are—to a degree. The skill required to ascertain the intentions of a potential threat is built off our innate ability to intuit predatory behavior. As predators, we instinctively recognize predatory signaling. Fear sounds different than anger, and both are also different from the emotionless command of someone who is othering you. Subtle clues, such as the tone of the threat's voice, can help distinguish the emotional tenor. When we are watching human interaction unfold, we have lots of information to work with, and you're working with this information at an intuitive level every day. It's time to bring that unconscious competency up into your conscious awareness.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

- ⦿ Metaphorically, getting the lizard, monkey, and human brain working cooperatively to inform the moment-by-moment decisions is crucial in a potential self-defense encounter. This is what we are doing when we engage in threat assessment.
- ⦿ When a threat assessment is necessary, we can divide human behavior into two groups: preattack cues/preassault indicators and threat displays.
 - Preassault or preattack indicators signal that the attack is imminent. These behaviors represent the threat's physiological preparation necessary for physical violence. The “pre-” in these terms often gets interpreted to mean that you have time. But you don't really. It's going to happen inside of seconds—maybe even inside of a microsecond count.
 - If you are observing a threat display, there is a good chance you are looking at escalation on the social scale. That doesn't necessarily mean it will be a light tap if it goes physical; remember that social violence can end up in lethal action.



- ⦿ The upside is that de-escalation may work. In a threat display, you need to look as big and intimidating as possible, like a kitten who encounters a large dog—all puffed up, with its tail straight up in the air and back arched.
- ⦿ Humans have their own special version of this behavior when faced with a threat: Our arms go wide so we look a little bigger; our chin goes up; we get bouncy up on our toes; our steps get wider; our shoulders move forward; and perhaps we make some throwing, or baton, gestures.
- ⦿ This will progress if nobody intervenes. The two people will engage in big loopy strikes, which are designed to cause some damage but not a massive amount of damage. There will also be some range testing going on; a shove by one person could push the other out into a better range for the first person to hit the second person.

- ⦿ The loopy strikes let other people see, and witnesses are necessary here because they need to be able to pull the two people apart. When they do, each person gets to walk off and say loud remarks about how if they hadn't been pulled apart, the other one would've been pummeled.
- ⦿ This is all designed to create a very strong sense of dominance display—threatening behavior. The two people's voices will get loud. There will also be overt (but maybe not conscious) efforts to control rising adrenaline. There will be shallow breathing because the two people are getting worked up as the adrenaline rises. The jaws and hands will clench. Sometimes, there will be a change in the complexion of the people; they will get flushed. There might also be some kind of shaking action.
- ⦿ This is all overt information that it's about to really go down. One person is intentionally communicating this fact—not only to the other person, but also to the witnesses in hopes that the other person will back down so that the first person gets to brag about his or her toughness without actually fighting.

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

- ⦿ As the threat works his or her way up the social conflict scale, he or she will be progressively othering you as he or she inches closer and closer to violence. Your job is to counterbalance the threat's escalation—and create a degree of rapport.
- ⦿ Think about it as finding the common ground you both share. This works to de-escalate yourself, too, because if you find yourself coiling up in response, then you are beginning to “other” as well. Bring yourself back, and ask yourself, What's our common ground? Find the tribes or tribal markers you share.
- ⦿ You don't need to be a therapist to do this. And one of the most effective therapeutic rapport-building tactics is a skill you already have: It's a basic social survival tactic called active listening, and it boils down to a straightforward set of tactics that is called intelligence gathering in the law enforcement and military paradigm.

- ⦿ Listen to both what someone says and how he or she says it and you can learn about his or her likes, dislikes, enthusiasms, and fears. What he or she is willing to lie about tells you where he or she is distrustful or is hiding information. Words, silences, and body language and how they're combined also reveal someone's dominant paradigms and scripts.
- ⦿ What people don't say is sometimes more important than what they do say. Information that is left out of someone's conversation is left out for a reason. Maybe it feels irrelevant to him or her, or maybe he or she is intentionally hiding something.
- ⦿ Another data point to add to your intelligence gathering is how someone is dressed. What people wear says a great deal about them, from the role they are in at the moment to whether or not they want to attract attention. If someone wants to blend in to the environment, he or she will dress congruent to the environment. If the person doesn't want a victim to see identifying features, he or she may wear a hat and sunglasses, for example.
- ⦿ What people say, how they speak, and how they are dressed tells you a lot—but know, too, that other people are reading you in the same way, and some of those people may be reading you as a potential target. What are you giving away? What do your clothes tell the stranger you pass on the street? During your casual conversation with the grocery store checkout clerk, what has he or she just learned about your family? This isn't about making you paranoid; it's about getting you to be more consciously aware.
- ⦿ The next metric in your intelligence gathering is how you use verbal and nonverbal communication. This is an aspect of active listening and intel collection because when it is used to build rapport, it keeps people talking. And if they are talking, they may not be hitting. They may be thinking, and if they are thinking, their human brain may be engaged. All of this helps with prevention, avoidance, and options for de-escalation.
- ⦿ Specific to rapport, the more someone feels aligned with you, the less likely he or she is to see you as an easy target. The following are a few specific skills you can work with:

- **Matching and mirroring.** You can use both language and your body to match or mirror what the other person is doing if you don't feel like there is a good connection with the person or if you want to keep the person talking. If you're sitting differently, then as the two of you are talking, you may subtly and gradually shift your position so you're sitting more similarly. You can also use words that the person you're talking to is using.
 - **Pausing and thinking.** This technique buys you time to unhook yourself if you're getting hooked. And as you pause and think, even if you're not actually thinking, it causes the other person to feel like you're actually interested in what he or she is saying, which is very helpful if conflict is brewing.
 - **Feedback.** As you give the other person feedback, match his or her sensory language. After the other person is done saying something, then you say something back like "Oh, alright. So what you're saying is..." and that keeps the person talking. Directly asking questions and encouraging the person to tell you more also keeps him or her in conversation. Try to include as many open-ended questions as you can; stay away from questions the other person can answer with just a yes or no.
- ⊙ If you think you are engaging in active listening and it's not working, then one of two things is happening: You got caught or you are in your own way. You either aren't actually paying attention or your internal monologue is too loud.
 - ⊙ You know those times when you are listening to someone talk, but you are actually starting to plan your response? We don't split attention well. If you are planning, you aren't paying attention to the person talking; you are paying attention to your internal conversation, which means your monkey brain is in charge.
 - ⊙ Active listening and not being othered set the groundwork for more specific tactics. These tactics come straight from Gavin de Becker's *Gift of Fear*, in which he talks about successful predatory tactics. These are human tactics for rapport, and although we identify them with criminal behavior, they can be used just as effectively for rapport building and the resulting opportunities for de-escalation.

- **Forced teaming.** You can deliberately use language to create a sense that you and the other person are connected, alike, or the same. This is the strategic use of the word “we.” It plays on in-group dynamics and helps prevent being othered. A simple statement like “Hey, it looks like we have a problem here. What should we do about it?” creates a connection, as if the two of you are on the same team.
- **Loan sharking.** This subtly puts another person in your debt. It’s as simple as offering to grab someone a cup of coffee or a sandwich at lunch. “Hey, let me help you out here.” Generally, loan sharking is ineffective on people who have antisocial personality disorders or are deep on the asocial scale because it works on the need for someone to have a degree of connection and to care whether he or she might owe someone something.
- **Typcasting.** People want to be special. Saying that someone is ordinary drives him or her to show that he or she is different. A predator might target a potential rape victim and say, “I didn’t think you were a stuck-up chick like every other girl here,” which would drive the victim away from whatever behavior is distancing her from the predator’s tactics and tools. This can also be used as a good-guy tool. For example, a law enforcement professional might use this tactic by saying, “If you are innocent, then why are you acting like a common criminal?” If you say the subject is acting like a group he or she doesn’t like, you might be able to nudge his or her behavior in the direction that may prevent escalation.
- **Discounting “no.”** “No” only means “no” if you agree. Ignore statements that don’t work for you; don’t respond in any way. If you find a way to stay in the conversation, you may be able to work through the resistance. Asking someone to set down his or her weapon often gets some kind of “no” response. Stay in it and get past the no. Flip it around. If you set a “no” type of boundary and it gets ignored, your antennas should go up.
- Find common ground; build rapport. If you use active listening and tactics like forced teaming and loan sharking, you can avoid or de-escalate the majority of social violence by unwinding it when it’s still just escalating conflict—as long as you can keep your own monkey brain in check.

- ⊙ However, if the cues associated with social violence and conflict aren't present and your gut tells you that something is off, it may be time to look for the preattack indicators. In threat assessment, this is the second category. And while it doesn't preclude social factors, there is a strong bias toward an asocial dynamic.
- ⊙ These tactics look different than threat displays, which are designed for the monkey-dance dynamic. Here, range development looks a little different. As the threat approaches to put him- or herself in range, it's much less overt. There is also a different type of attack positioning that involves protecting part of the body as well as keeping an exit route available more readily than if he or she were squared off in the monkey dance.
- ⊙ The threat's hands are also less obvious. This allows for the opportunity to conceal or reach for something. This bladed position will also allow the threat to coil, so it's easier for him or her to be ready to throw an attack. The threat may look around—not to see who is watching the show, but to make sure that no one is watching. This is a type of witness check so the threat can keep going without anyone intervening.
- ⊙ From a protective standpoint, rather than jutting out to look big, the threat's jaw is tucked in. These self-soothing actions are a type of adrenaline mitigation. They're softer and less obvious and tell you that the threat is familiar with his or her own adrenalization, so he or she knows how to soothe him- or herself.
- ⊙ You may see something that looks like a weapons check—just a natural, unconscious thing to remind him- or herself where his or her weapon is in case he or she needs to use it. Then there's a draw, which is going to be subtle, and a deployment, which gets the weapon ready. The threat is not waving it around to make you scared; he or she is keeping it so you can't respond to it until he or she actually wants to use it.
- ⊙ You might move to hunting in packs, which is also more in the asocial paradigm of violence. Like an animal who hunts in packs, you are going to use this with your partner's coordinated movements to surround your target or split off so you and your partner are harder to identify before you move in.

- If these behaviors are present, the safe assumption is that this is going physical. You need to move. You may have a split second that allows you to avoid being hit, and if not, use what you know and get to safety.

Now that you can see conflict and violence as just methods of communication instead of the dark underbelly of humanity, you have another superpower. You'll be a rock star at work, improve your personal relationships, deepen your friendships, and dramatically improve your odds in self-defense.

You also have a skill set that many lifelong martial artists don't have—a toolbox full of preventive strategies. The physical skills are what draw people to training because they are fun and challenging, but as important as these skills are, avoidance and de-escalation should be your first line of defense.

Resources

Harari, *Sapiens*.

Miller, *Conflict Communication*.

Sapolsky, *Behave*.

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Think about someone you feel you have nothing in common with. What tribal markers do you share?
- 2 How do you feel about using loan sharking as a rapport-building tactic? If it bothers you, why does your monkey brain think it's bad or wrong?

VERBAL BOUNDARY SETTING AND PREDATOR TEST

LESSON 15

Boundary setting is part of our natural social contract, and various forms of boundary setting exist in all cultures. For self-defense, boundary setting can be used to test for asocial behavior as well as to help an overly enthusiastic friend avoid trouble. In this lesson, you will learn about three types of boundary setting: hard boundary setting, bridging boundary setting, and soft boundary setting.

You are 15 lessons into the course now, and who you are in lesson 15 versus who you were in lesson 1 has changed. See if you can notice any difference.

If you're alone, work shadowboxing and targeting for a few reps, and if you want, you can also follow the people in the video lesson in the one-step drill—watching decisions, targeting, etc.

If you have a partner, work with the people in the video lesson in a simultaneous one-step drill.

PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

- ⊙ Having fun with a group of friends, we make choices to keep the encounter going; having a fulfilling conversation with a loved one, we stay engaged in the dialogue so that it continues. These are basic social patterns of engagement, and because an asocial predator mimics the social patterns of an everyday person, this puts socially oriented people in the position of trying to figure out whether a person is a good person just being social and friendly or a predator hunting his or her prey.

- ⦿ At first glance, you may not be able to identify an asocial pattern unfolding because it can so closely mimic our typical patterns of interaction. You also know that part of what creates a high-reward/low-risk target for a threat is our deeply programmed social rules for behaving like decent citizens.



- ⦿ This pyramid represents comfort levels with force and coercion.
- ⦿ If you run into someone who is comfortable with a higher level of force than you are, there are two things at play: You're going to be uncomfortable and distrustful of the person at some level and maybe even judge him or her as a generally bad human being; and in a confrontation, you will lose.
- ⦿ To some extent, at this point in the course, you are most likely comfortable up to at least the assaultive level. A good percentage of the physical training in this course is based on hurting someone—i.e., assault.
- ⦿ On the other end of the spectrum, the highest-order win is to avoid the encounter altogether, so what happens in all the points between? This is where boundary setting comes in.

HARD BOUNDARY SETTING

- ⊙ For the purposes of this course, boundary setting is a specific tool for de-escalation with a hidden benefit. It can be used in a soft-skill application, or it can be used as a command and a directive. In both applications, not only are you working to control the situation with words, but you may also be able to ascertain whether the dynamic is a social one or an asocial one. Using it this way, boundary setting becomes a predator test.
- ⊙ In the previous lesson, you learned about the physical, nonverbal tells that signal what may be about to happen. But how do you know if it's asocial? Predators use the same skills to create rapport as the good guys do, so you need a way to assess the dynamic. This is where you use boundary setting as a predator test. This follows a formula:
 - state the boundary;
 - restate the boundary;
 - state the consequence; and, if necessary,
 - execute the consequence.
- ⊙ The language and body communication that comes inside the boundary setting that goes with the predator test is associated with assertive action. Your words need to be directive, and you need to avoid using negative words, such as the “don’t” in “Don’t come any closer.” This is because there can be a glitch in our neural processing where we don’t quite hang onto the contracted “not,” so you want to use positive language when giving a command.
- ⊙ Eye contact in this situation needs to be dead-on. You have already identified that this is a problem, and you need to communicate with the other person that in this interaction, you are no joke—not someone to be messed with. That soft, coy eye contact that we use when we’re uncomfortable is not going to help.
- ⊙ Body language has to be very distinct—open and strong.

- ⦿ The bottom line is you cannot play poker with this. If you say a specific consequence, you are going to do it. It has to be something that you really are comfortable executing and can follow through with, regardless of what that consequence is (kicking someone in the stomach or engaging in an eye-gouge).
- ⦿ But if after that stated consequence the person doesn't leave you, he or she has failed the predator test. He or she has discounted "no," and as a strategy, it's to control you, not to make friends with you. If the predator fails the test, you have to execute the consequence.
- ⦿ This takes practice. Being this way with another human violates a ton of our social protocols, so if you don't practice it, the skill may not be available.
- ⦿ Let's start by scripting what you're going to say to help dial down the weirdness factor. Feel free to use your own words and actions; the script exists just to give you something to work with.
 - The first time you state the boundary, say "Step back and leave me alone."
 - Then, the second time, say, "I said, step back."
 - State the consequence: "If you don't step back and leave, I will yell and I will hurt you."
 - Execute: You will growl, shout, or do whatever you want and then use a jab-cross-kick-retreat pattern, as shown in the video lesson.
- ⦿ Unexpected change can trip us up and create a momentary freeze while our brain tries to figure out what just happened. That reactionary gap gets a little bit longer. The more you play with this, the less you'll get tripped up when there's new data.
- ⦿ So, let's add some new data. Grab your meat puzzle—your partner. If you're solo, watch the people in the video lesson and identify the choice points.

- ⊙ With this kind of timeline game, at any point along those four points of reference that your partner will throw out there, you can wave off—meaning that you can accept his or her directive—or you can go all the way through to the end of the script. If you go all the way through to the end and have ignored every boundary that your partner has set, then your partner is going to have to execute whatever his or her stated consequence was. Then, you switch roles.
- ⊙ If you are playing the threat, as you approach your partner, you decide if the wave-off is going to work on you. As the threat, ignore it at least once, requiring your partner—your target—to go all the way to the consequence. If you are the target and your partner doesn't wave off, you have to go physical. What you do will be up to you.
- ⊙ One of the reasons the blunt, direct commands work is they may startle the threat. You are off-script, and that means the threat has to think. Another way to think about blunt, directive language is to call them alpha commands. If that's more comfortable for your monkey brain, then so be it. Either way, going off-script buys you precious seconds, and you can and need to use them to your advantage.

BRIDGING BOUNDARY SETTING

- ⊙ There is a slightly softer version of this boundary-setting formula that can be used in generally safe environments—with someone you know or hold as a casual acquaintance:
 - ask
 - tell
 - tell plus
 - show
- ⊙ This version of boundary setting comes from Randy King, a member of the Violence Dynamics team out of Canada. He made a living as a bouncer and learned that this soft workaround can help you get through an escalating dynamic in certain situations more effectively than a hard, direct, blunt, stated boundary.

- ⦿ You can apply this version to an office setting. For example, someone is attempting an intimidation maneuver, enters your office, and closes the door. Say something like “Hey, could you open the door, please?” If the person blows you off, then say, “Open the door.” Then, “I need you to open the door; if you don’t, I will walk out and go straight to HR.” If the person blows you off now, you can call HR or you can get up and walk out of the office and seek assistance, etc.



SOFT BOUNDARY SETTING

- ⦿ In addition to hard boundary setting and using it as a predator test as well as the not-as-abrasive bridging option, there is a third aspect to boundary setting, a version you likely already use: soft boundary setting. Any time you say, “No thanks; I have plans” or “Thanks for the offer, but I need to get to a meeting,” you are using soft boundary setting.
- ⦿ It can be nonverbal, too. For example, when someone at the office is trying to chat you up and you are still working and you just occasionally glance up, clearly only half listening—that’s you communicating that you aren’t going to engage him or her right now. And it usually works; the person usually waves off after a few minutes.
- ⦿ The key in soft boundary setting is to get conscious and to check for effect. Is it working? If not, you get to decide when you shift over to the bridge or cross all the way over into hard boundary setting.



- ⦿ This is so personal and situation-specific that you can't be told what the right thing to do will be. If you're at work and someone is being a desk pest and you say, "If you don't leave my office, I am going to scream and kick you in the stomach," then you're probably going to get complained on.
- ⦿ You have to solve the problem you have—not the one you want to have. This means that the solution has to match the situation.

In all three boundary-setting situations, your gut—your intuition—is critical. Trust your instincts. Your brain has been cataloguing hundreds of data points across those critical seconds—information you can't consciously process. But that data is informing your monkey and lizard brain, and when they work together, you get that gut feeling that something isn't right.

When you see the preassault or attack indicators, you may be past any opportunity for verbal boundary setting and other forms of de-escalation. If that's the case, there is another option that enters into the boundary conversation—which you will learn about in the next lesson.

Resources

Miller, *Conflict Communication*.

Valdiserri, *Creepology*.

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are some situations in which the bridging boundary-setting formula would be useful?
- 2 What are your no-go behaviors—things you would be unwilling to do—and therefore need to avoid listing as a potential consequence?

PHYSICAL BOUNDARY SETTING AND DEFENSES

LESSON 16

If you find yourself hard in the sights of someone in preattack mode, escape is not likely an option, and the avoidance ship has probably sailed. And remember that verbal de-escalation requires cognitive processing for both you and the threat; by the time your brain reaches your mouth, you're probably going to get hit. But there is a type of boundary setting that may still be an option: preemptive intervention, meaning that you hit first. You have learned about physical interaction in a number of different ways—high-speed problem solving, solving the meat puzzle, and rehabilitating your human animal. Physical encounters are also communication, and boundaries are being set, respected, tested, and violated all the time. You will learn about preemptive intervention in this lesson, but the lesson starts with the fundamental aspects of physical boundary setting.

This lesson will be physical, so make sure your space is ready for training. There will be a lot of principle application, training, and some play.

And you know your body pretty well by now, so if you need a warm-up for a physical lesson, run through one before getting started.

STANCES

- ⦿ With everything you've done so far in this course, you are already familiar with the following physical positions, or stances. Now you're just going to be practicing them deliberately rather than intuitively, giving you another way to anchor into the skill.

- ◉ Let's start with how you stand as part of the nonverbal, physical boundary-setting dynamic.

For proper form of these parries, reference the video lesson.

- **Neutral, or passive, stance.** This involves positioning your feet wider than your hips—at least as wide as your shoulders—so that you have a good base. Your hands are down. One reason for training this way is that sometimes you need to work cold, and working from this position gives you the opportunity to play around with what happens if you get caught off guard. Another reason to deliberately work this way is that in a potential escalating dynamic, keeping your hands down, as long as you're quick enough to get them up in time, gives you the opportunity to appear as if you're working cold. This can be a good way to manipulate the interaction and keep it under your control without giving a whole lot away.



- **Guarded stance.** In this position, your feet stay pretty much the same as they are in the neutral/passive stance, but your hands come up. In Krav Maga, this is called a semiready or semipassive position, and it serves as a nonverbal cue that you don't want to fight—and that you aren't stupid and see that something's brewing.



- **Fighting stance.** Called a ready stance in Krav Maga, this position puts you in the most openly ready position for your own benefit and involves your hands coming up and then stepping into a split-stance position. Different methods of moving create different methods of communication: If you step forward, you communicate a warning to the other person that you are ready for a physical altercation; if you step backward, you communicate that you want to de-escalate this but you are still in a ready position.



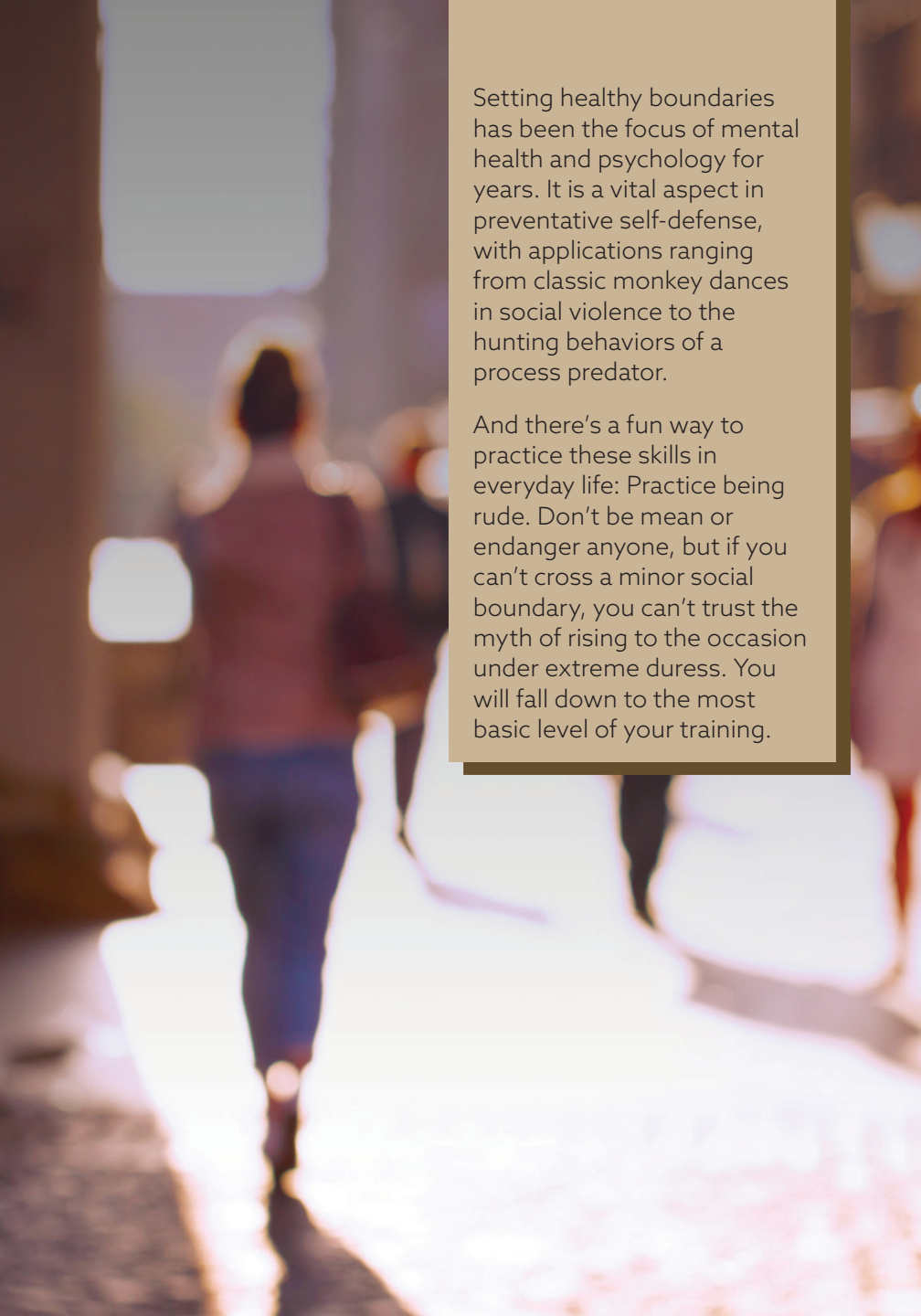
- ⦿ There are two more stances, but they both fall into a single category: tactical-ready positions.
 - The first one is specific. If you are dealing with trained and experienced threats, they will notice; untrained people may notice that you changed your position, but they may or may not understand the communication. In this split-hands stance, your feet can stay neutral or they can split, but your hands go from a casual position into a cross position, somewhat close to your body. One hand is a little lower; the other hand is a little higher. The key isn't which hand is high and low based on your handedness; it's based on your read of the situation and the environment. Regardless of what your feet are doing, there is deliberate weight management in how you load your body and shift your weight depending on what's coming.
 - The second tactical-ready option is defined by you specifically. It's highly personal, so you'll need to play with what works for you so that it's natural to you and your body. Examples include tilting your head on your hand, twirling your hair, or stroking your beard. It's the same concept of the hands being split, but you're doing it so that it's not as big of a tell to the people around you. It fits you, your body, and the circumstance.
- ⦿ As communication, tactical-ready positions represent a language tied to time. If you can move into any of these stances, you have time to think, plan, and make decisions.

PARRIES

- ⦿ If the situation escalates from the stance, then you need a few solid defensive options—which are a bridge, much like the bridging boundary setting you learned about in the previous lesson. These buy you the opportunity to assess, and potentially leave or de-escalate, while also getting you more prepared for an all-out physical encounter.

For proper form of these parries, reference the video lesson.

- ⊙ In the video lesson, you will learn how to do a basic parry, or what in Krav Maga is called inside defense. A parry is a deflection action; you're getting the strike to move away. It is not the same as a block, which stops the action. You become a wall.
- ⊙ If you're solo, you can work this dry—shadowboxing style. If you have a partner, here are some basic rules for being a good training partner:
 - Help your partner practice.
 - Don't make this hard.
 - Don't try to prove something.
 - This is not the time for "let's make this as realistic as possible."
 - Switch roles so you both get to play.
- ⊙ These parries are forward-facing and represent social violence dynamics. Social violence—monkey dance stuff—likes eye contact. The threat's ego is up in his or her head saying, "I want you to see who messed you up." That's why it comes at you head-on.
- ⊙ But if there's more intent to just ambush you—surprise you and limit your ability to fight back—then the threat is coming at you from the edges. It's possible you won't defend the first strike; you just may not see it in time. But with practice, your chances of catching the first one or being able to stay on your feet and defend the second strike increase.
- ⊙ In the video lesson, you will learn how to work from the edges, also known as outside defenses. If you're working with a partner, the same rules apply, but the strikes come from the angles; if you're solo, just shadowbox these.
- ⊙ In Krav Maga, these are foundational skills. And you'll see these actions in other martial arts as well, because they work.
- ⊙ In the video lesson, there are several applications of the structural position that is being worked with. For example, one of the actions can be used as a block instead of a parry, or deflection. These are good ones to practice in front of a mirror because structure is extremely important. You can play with a partner or shadowbox-style, working various angles. Either way, keep your responses varied; this gives you a broader toolbox and prevents your actions from becoming overly predictable.



Setting healthy boundaries has been the focus of mental health and psychology for years. It is a vital aspect in preventative self-defense, with applications ranging from classic monkey dances in social violence to the hunting behaviors of a process predator.

And there's a fun way to practice these skills in everyday life: Practice being rude. Don't be mean or endanger anyone, but if you can't cross a minor social boundary, you can't trust the myth of rising to the occasion under extreme duress. You will fall down to the most basic level of your training.

- ⦿ This has all been about defending against strikes, but the same principles apply for kicks—which are often executed in the social violence dynamic and will come at you from the front. There is a type of leg parry, or inside leg defense, that can be seen in the video lesson.

PREEMPTIVE DEFENSE

- ⦿ As you continue to practice these options—when you defend and counter—practice on a continuum. Defend and throw only one counter, checking for effect or leaving. Defend and throw four or five counters because it's necessary against a continuing attacker. Any of these actions that begin with a defensive maneuver is based on time and a willingness to focus in on the reality of what's happening in the moment. And it becomes a type of physical boundary setting.
- ⦿ Collapsing this timeline down even more brings us to the option of the preemptive defense. This will look a lot like assault to bystanders, so you must be able to articulate the preattack cues coming from the threat. You don't have to wait until you have taken damage to respond to the indicators.



This video lesson ends with a summary drill that integrates everything you've played with from lesson 1 forward in a one-step drill.

If you have a partner, play along. Go slowly enough to notice when everything you've worked on shows up in your solutions to the meat puzzle.

If you're solo, watch the people in the video and identify the different skills as they show up. They're not programmed to use the skills on purpose just for proof; it's part of the natural skill set in a rehabbed apex-level predator.

And there's a good chance you've been doing these actions all along, but now you just have a way to explain them.

Resources

Hatsumi and Cole, *Words of Consequence*.

Miller, *Meditations on Violence*.

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are your imagined consequences for violating small social boundaries, such as tying up the line at the local coffee house by struggling to make a decision?
- 2 What are some situations in which preemptive striking might be justified?

ETHICAL ARTICULATION SKILLS IN SELF-DEFENSE

LESSON 17

One of the major pieces of training and education that is missing in many martial arts and self-defense programs is how to handle the legal and ethical implications of a self-defense situation. It's not clear why this gets passed over, but it really shouldn't. You don't want to be in the position of having the tools to protect yourself but end up serving a sentence for assault. And this does happen, even to professionals. The information provided in this lesson doesn't guarantee to keep you out of the legal crosshairs, but knowledge is power, and that power can go a long way.

SELF-DEFENSE IN A LEGAL SENSE

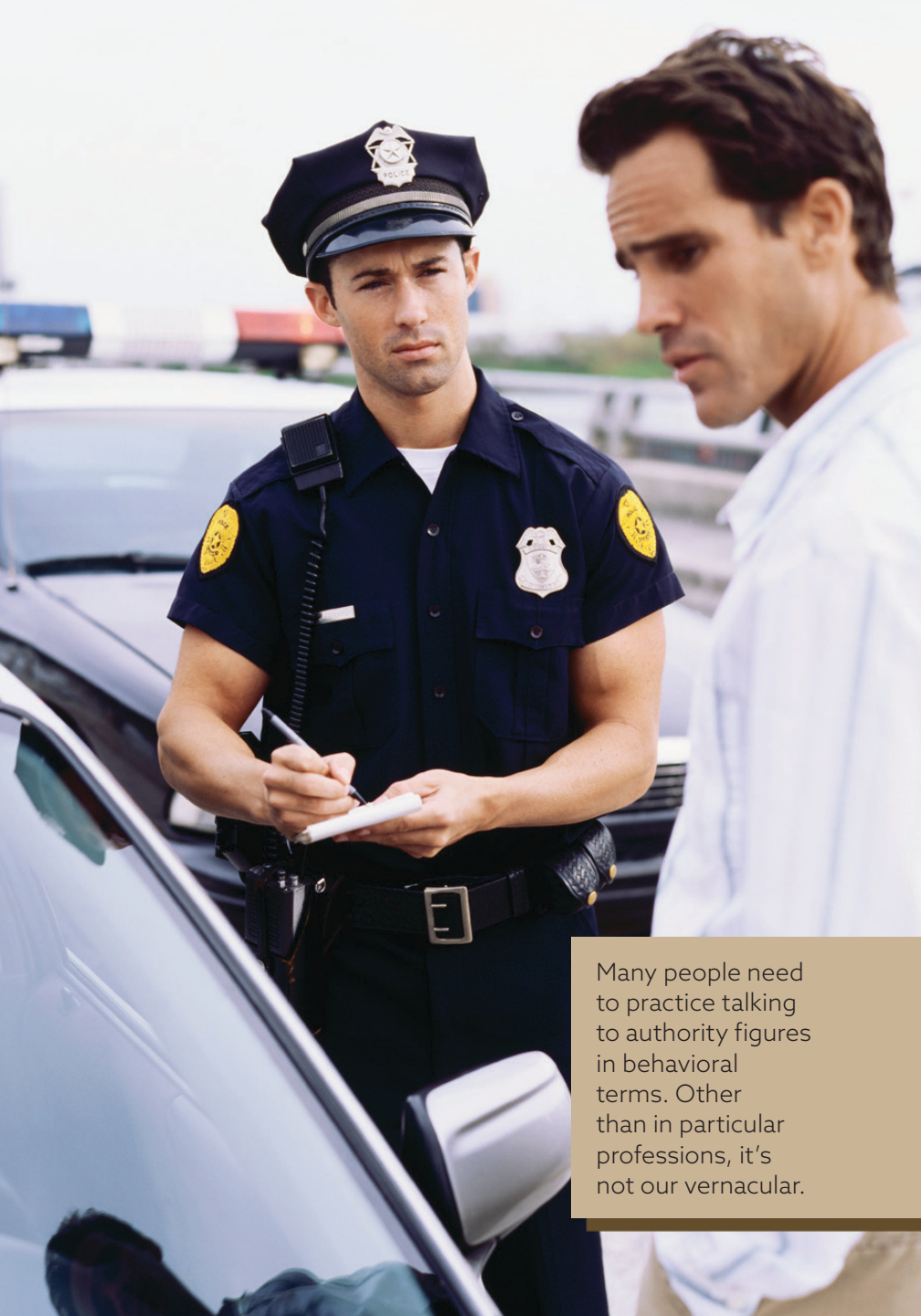
- ⊙ Self-defense is a legal term. In short, it means that you have committed a degree of assault and feel you should be given a pass—because the other guy started it and you were just trying to get yourself to safety.
- ⊙ Law.com's legal dictionary offers this particular definition: “the use of reasonable force to protect oneself or members of the family from bodily harm from the attack of an aggressor, if the defender has reason to believe he/she/they is/are in danger. Self-defense is a common defense by a person accused of assault, battery, or homicide.”
- ⊙ Cultural mores and social rules have the potential to be highly problematic, but there are two rules you should hold close.
 1. Learn to describe what happened—your actions and their actions—in behavioral terms. You can get good at this through practice.
 2. If you carry a weapon of any kind, or you decide to get into any sort of longer-term training, research legal support options. Find out what attorneys in your area have experience with self-defense cases. If you need an attorney, you don't want to be dealing with the hunt for experienced legal counsel while you're unpacking the emotional aftermath of a violent encounter.

- ⦿ You can make yourself crazy learning all the nuances of all the legal ins and outs of self-defense in your jurisdiction. That's what the lawyers are for—and, consequently, why you should know who the good ones are in self-defense.

ARTICULATION SKILLS

- ⦿ If you demonstrate a level of care for your loved ones, neighbors, and coworkers—if you talk to the kid bagging your groceries and bring your vehicle to a stop while the school bus offloads the kids in your neighborhood—then you probably have a decent set of ethics.
- ⦿ If you follow your internal ethical compass, you can trust yourself to make the right decision if you are ever faced with self-defense decisions. The problems come in when we neglect working on the articulation skills necessary to explain our actions to law enforcement and members of the judicial system.
- ⦿ Effective articulation begins with understanding how your monkey brain can get you into trouble. Your monkey brain is that one friend who's really good at convincing you that stupid behavior is the best way to have a good time. And when it comes to escalating conflict and violence, there are four specific circumstances in which your monkey is going to get you in trouble.
 1. The encounter has gone physical, and the other people give up but you don't see it and don't stop because you're too adrenalized to notice.
 2. They leave, and it triggers your chase instincts, so you run after them.
 3. Revenge kicks in and you throw extra punches or kicks because now you are just angry and want to make them pay.
 4. It was really just a monkey dance—mutual combat—and you're trying to call it self-defense.
- ⦿ There's also a combination of these: For example, a little revenge and a little chase instinct shows up when you start to leave but then you come back for more.
- ⦿ All of these circumstances put you at risk legally and may create feelings of regret and self-recrimination when the dust settles.

- ⦿ If someone puffs up at you as he or she walks by, that may be a threat display, but it probably won't be enough to justify your punching him or her in response. If you see two or three of these behaviors, that improves your position—the position you'll be taking to defend your actions.
- ⦿ To help you describe what happened around you if you ever need to explain your actions, use the acronym IMOP: intent, means, opportunity, and preclusion.
 - **Intent.** This indicates the threat's purposes to cause you harm. But how do you know? Maybe she threatened you with a voicemail message or he directly told you he was going to come back with a gun. Intent can also be expressed physically. Nonverbal communication of intent might be a weapons check, for example, or someone gesturing something ominous while making direct eye contact with you.
 - **Means.** Can the threat actually cause you serious bodily harm? A toddler throwing a tantrum because he or she doesn't want to go to bed definitely has intent, particularly if he or she is trying to bite you. But can the toddler really cause you serious bodily injury with such small teeth? Does he or she really have the means to deeply hurt or injure you? You are bigger and stronger and have the ability to contain the toddler without taking much damage in the process.
 - **Opportunity.** The big guy across the room jabbing his finger in your direction and yelling that he's going to mess you up has intent and the means—but from 20 feet away, he can't reach you. If he isn't waving a gun at you, then he doesn't have the opportunity to hurt you at the moment.
 - **Preclusion.** Did you have other options? Did you have to use force to keep yourself safe? Could you have escaped? Could you have gotten to a safe hiding place and called the police instead? If preclusion is present, then it means you had other options—reasonable options that involved less use of force.
- ⦿ While we can't eliminate chance from our lives, solid skills in articulation can help compensate for the factors in conflict and violence that we otherwise don't get to control.



Many people need to practice talking to authority figures in behavioral terms. Other than in particular professions, it's not our vernacular.

- ⦿ Good guys suck at telling the truth to law enforcement; talking to a cop can be really nerve-racking. But bad guys are used to doing this and frequently are well-practiced at effectively lying to the police; they consciously work at looking like they are the victim.
- ⦿ You can't count on witnesses being present to help explain what happened. And if there are any witnesses, they probably won't see all the weird little indicators you saw that told you this was going south. And if you defend yourself successfully, those witnesses may only see you behaving violently.
- ⦿ When you are asked how you knew that a person was going to grab you, you can't just say, "But I met IMOP: He/she had intent and means and opportunity, and I had no other choice." Answering with "I don't know; I just knew" is not going to help you. But if you take IMOP and apply it to clean behavioral language, you've got something.
- ⦿ You must learn to work in descriptive and behavioral terms. Tell your monkey brain that your human brain knows how to win in this area.

GLITCH-HUNTING EXERCISE

- ⦿ This glitch-hunting exercise will help you get in touch with your ethics regarding your use of force in self-defense. Consider the following mental scenario and note your answers. Close your eyes if you want to.
 - Let's say that you're in an isolated alley and you carry a gun for safety. There's a man walking rapidly toward you with a knife out. What do you do? Do you use your gun?
 - Now consider the same situation, but this time, a 14-year-old boy wielding a knife—looking angry, maybe high—comes charging at you, with the knife swinging back and forth and flashing it about throat-high on you. Do you pull your weapon?
 - Next, consider the same situation, but this time the person with a knife who comes charging at you is a 9-year-old girl, and there's blood on the knife and blood on her hands. Do you pull your weapon?



- Finally, consider the same situation, but this time it is a pregnant woman, and her knife is bloody and so are her hands and clothes; she's clearly angry—maybe high—and the knife is coming at you in rapid stabs. Do you pull your weapon?
- ⦿ There aren't any right or wrong answers to the questions in this exercise. A gun was used in the examples because it represents a high level of violence, but don't mistake open-hand encounters as somehow less violent.
- ⦿ This exercise helps highlight where you are going to pause, where you are going to hesitate, where you may try to de-escalate someone who is in his or her lizard brain, and where you may be more willing to take damage than to cause it. These are important things to learn about yourself in the journey of self-defense.
- ⦿ If there is anything about your responses that bother you, spend some time thinking about why you had that response and why it bothers you. Your responses don't make you a bad or a good person; they are based on your experiences and the way you see the world, which color your decisions. Just don't let them be a mystery.

Continued practice with articulation will help you in conflict resolution pretty much everywhere in your life—from small differences of opinion all the way up to a heated argument.

By getting good at articulation in behavioral terms, you'll be teaching your monkey brain to let your human brain handle conflict and you'll have important practice under your belt, should you ever need to speak to law enforcement or an attorney about your actions.

If you have any questions about self-defense laws where you live, do some investigating and find knowledgeable, experienced professionals who can help you with the answers.

Resources

Larkin, *When Violence Is the Answer*.

Miller, *Facing Violence*.


Questions to consider

- 1 What are the sociocultural factors that influence your feelings about your own use of force?
- 2 Watch a clip from the news or social media site that you frequent and practice articulating reasonable self-defense for both sides of an incident. Use behavioral language to describe the actions of each side in light of intent, means, opportunity, and preclusion (IMOP). Was it more difficult to articulate for one person than for the other? If so, why?

PHYSICAL CHEATS IN SELF-DEFENSE

LESSON 18

We have a deep cultural ethic that puts cheating into the bad and wrong category of human behavior. But in a self-defense situation, if it goes physical and you are fighting fair, you will be the only one playing by those rules, and you will lose. The rules of fair play are learned, and socially, the punishment for cheating is swift and decisive. If you get caught cheating on a college exam, there's a good chance you will be kicked out of your university, and cheating on your spouse is still one of the major reasons for divorce. But when it comes to self-defense, you have to learn to cheat—and learn to do so efficiently.



Cheating in a violent encounter is about violating the deep social contract you have with fair play, not about cheating the legal system.

CHEATS: LOCATIONS ON THE BODY

- ⊙ You can't actually be taught *how* to cheat. Cheats are gifts—opportunities that suddenly show up in your awareness while you're solving the meat puzzle. And the only thing that makes those little moments of ingenuity cheating is how appalled and righteously indignant your monkey brain is going to be.
- ⊙ For self-defense, cheats are creative solutions to the meat puzzle. The video lesson will work through various cheats on the following list, and perhaps you can discover new ones as you go.

⊙ **Hair**

- long hair
- temple
- armpits
- beards

⊙ **Head/Neck**

- windowshading (lips, cheeks)
- ears as handles and downward ripping
- jaw/gland spear
- facemasking
- double/single ear slap
- pressure point under the nose
- thumb in the eye (dig/scrape)
- larynx strangle
- smelling people and saying strange things (neck and head)
- yelling very close to the ear (better if prolonged)

⊙ **Torso**

- thumb (or big toe) in the armpit
- shoulder jam
- clavicle pressure point/pull
- ribcage under grab
- groin bite
- lawnmower pull (testicles)
- hip disruptions (nerve crease)
- hip jams/sacrum
- Jack Horner (thumb/butt)
- kick in the testicles

⊙ **Legs/Feet**

- donkey bite peroneal strike (a.k.a. deadlegging)
- instep strike to the shin (with the right kind of shoes)
- foot stomp

⊙ **Fingers**

- finger split
- finger locks in general
- bifold thumb lock

⊙ **Irregulars**

- biting
- environmentals (improvised weapons)

CHEATS: IMPACT

- ⊙ What we gain from the majority of cheats is the element of surprise. These actions are unexpected and startling. They expand the threat's reactionary gap. But you have to move on that gap because unless what you do shuts down the threat, he or she is going to come back at you, and chances are he or she is not going to be particularly happy with you.

- ⊙ Because some situations may actually require a high level of force, the list of cheats can be reorganized by impact.

⊙ **Surprise**

- tickling
- Jack Horner
- smelling people and saying strange things
- nibbling

⊙ **Surprise and Pain = Disruption and Control**

- armpit, temple, beard, hair pulls
- clavicle pressure point/pull

- jaw/gland spear
- facemasking
- palm strike to base of the skull
- pressure point under the nose
- thumb (or big toe)in the armpit
- shoulder jam
- hip/sacrum jams
- groin bite
- hip disruptions (nerve crease)
- kick in the testicles
- ribcage under grab
- donkey bite
- peroneal strike (a.k.a. deadlegging)
- instep strike to the shin (with the right kind of shoes)
- foot trap/stomp
- bifold thumb lock
- finger locks in general
- biting (ear, nose, fingers, groin)
- shouting (very close to the ear)

⊙ **Pain to Injury = Injury to Damage**

- palm strike to base of the skull
- shoulder jam
- hip jams/sacrum
- hammer strikes to sinuses
- myocardial thump/strike
- groin bite
- kick in the testicles
- ears as handles and downward ripping
- biting (throat, testicles)
- windowshading (lips, cheeks)
- jackhammer the nose
- double/single ear slap
- thumb in the eye (dig/scrape)
- finger split
- lawnmower pull (testicles)
- environmentals (weapons of convenience)

⊙ **Damage to Death**

- larynx strangle
- throat punch in general
- environmentals (weapons of convenience)



What makes something a cheat isn't whether or not a formal system teaches it as a cheat; it's a cheat because the action violates a rule of engagement and your monkey brain's fair-play ethos.

- ⦿ There is a degree of crossover as the levels of force increase. Action that can cause pain may also be damaging. What makes for the difference is anchored in our principles. Increasing power generation, changing the target, or adding a weapon can amplify the impact.
- ⦿ Review the cheats from this lesson, make a note of the actions you know you can't or won't use, and take them off of your list. Self-defense is a dangerous paradigm in which to try to run a bluff. On the other hand, your affordances should be much broader now that you've taken this course, so there may not be very many of these that bother you.

Your mission is to find a meat puzzle and play with the list of cheats presented in this lesson—because while they're not hard, a few of them take a little practice.

And while you're playing with these, remember that there are a few you'll have to work without contact because there's really no way to make them less mean.

Resources

Larkin, *When Violence Is the Answer*.

MacYoung, *In the Name of Self-Defense*.

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are two cheats that make you cringe? What is it about those actions that are uncomfortable for you?
- 2 What might be other ways to amplify your ability to use the element of surprise?

JOINT LOCKS IN SELF-DEFENSE

LESSON 19

The experience of violence is chaotic, but the process of violence is pretty logical. If you can learn to set a clear, specific goal and take logical steps to achieve it based only on the goal, two things happen: Your allegiance to an imaginary set of rules evaporates, and your goal serves as an effective compass in what otherwise would feel intensely chaotic. Using the word “cheating” to explain what you learned about in the previous lesson is just a way to help your monkey brain understand what is necessary for your human brain to create order out of chaos. This lesson continues with the focus on cheats by adding joint locks to the conversation.

JOINTS AND JOINT LOCKS

- ⦿ In traditional martial arts, joint locks are not considered a violation of the fair-play rules. Use a joint lock on someone who is unfamiliar with them or who believes he or she has the upper hand and you can get a monkey-brain reaction similar to many of the cheats you’ve learned.
- ⦿ A joint lock is just a matter of applying what you know about structure. This lesson works with three basic types of joints: hinge joints, which are elbows and knees; ball-and-socket joints, which are shoulders and hips; and gliding joints, which are wrists and ankles.
- ⦿ Your neck involves hinge action and gliding actions—and a pivot joint is tucked in there, too—so it’s a little different. Your fingers are also combos, but the most obvious component is the hinging action.
- ⦿ Although there may be roughly 1,000 named locks, how you lock a joint is simple: You need to send the joint in the opposite direction of how it’s designed to move and create a base or counterpressure to keep the lock in place. Creating a base means doing something that prevents the person from getting away from the pressure and pain.



Be particularly cautious about using pain to teach a lesson; you can't always control the aftermath. If your motivation is to prove a point, then you are in a monkey dance for dominance. And if you use pain purely for the sake of revenge, you have at least two potential outcomes: The threat is going to escalate in a brutal game of payback; or it's going to work and the threat leaves, but he or she will be angry and humiliated and there may be an innocent (a child, a spouse, or a bystander) down the pipeline who is going to pay.

And depending on how you create a joint lock, the action can transition from pain to breaking bodies pretty quickly. This puts you on the use-of-force continuum, and IMOP is the litmus test for your actions.

HINGE JOINTS

- ⊙ In the video lesson, you will learn how to play with joints that have hinge capabilities, such as elbows, fingers, wrists, and the head and neck. You'll need another body to work with; you'll need the physical feedback to understand the counterpressure elements. If you don't have a body to play with at the moment, be sure to grab a willing participant later. In the meantime, you can watch the people in the video play with the meat puzzle.
- ⊙ Especially for safety's sake, go slow. If you get a good lock on, respond to your partner's tap-out or "red" signal by immediately releasing the lock. If you don't, the risk of injury is substantial.
- ⊙ If you're playing the part of the meat puzzle, don't be proud. As soon as you feel the pressure building on the joint, tap your partner hard enough to send a clear message.
- ⊙ Note that when playing with wrists, in addition to tapping out, another way to signal your partner that the lock is good and to reduce the pressure on your wrist is to follow the action to the ground.
- ⊙ Also note that your biological programs are hardwired to protect your spine, so when you get into someone's neck, those primal instincts to preserve the spine are likely going to kick in. And that person is going to move instinctively—trying to preserve his or her neck—in response to your action, which is why neck actions work nicely as structure disruptions.

BALL-AND-SOCKET JOINTS

- ⊙ Shoulders and hips are ball-and-socket joints, like the base of your fingers. The same thing is true for your toes. Hips and toes are kind of tough to lock up, and for self-defense, we want to keep things simple. Shoulders are a little more accessible and tend to offer up a compound lock—meaning that if you lock up a shoulder, there's a good chance something else got locked up on your way in.

- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will learn a few actions that apply to the shoulder. When playing with these with a partner, remember to tap out when you feel the pressure; don't take each other down unless you have a crash mat and extensive experience in a martial art with falls and throws.

GLIDING JOINTS

- ⦿ Knees and ankles can be much harder to work with because as structure goes, they are pretty reinforced. But the video lesson offers two examples of how they might be an option: the knee extension and the ankle shear.
- ⦿ Note that these are takedowns. If you decide to play with locking up ankles and knees, like the shoulder locks, don't walk them all the way out unless you and your partner both have the skill set to manage the risk and your environment is adequately prepared.
- ⦿ Also note that if you're on the ground, the ankle shear is one of many options.

All locks are gifts. They're part of the luck factor in a violent encounter. For locks to be part of your affordances, you need to practice learning to see the body's structure through that lens.

Joint locks work because they capitalize on structure. They also trigger pain-based reactions, and pain is a fickle friend in self-defense. If someone is really flexible, he or she may not feel the pressure past the point where you've learned to stop. If someone is intoxicated, he or she may not feel the pain until you've broken his or her arm. And some people just don't care. Like everything in self-defense, locks work—until they don't. Playing with them widens your affordances and deepens your toolbox. Just don't make them your primary objective.

Resources

Miller, *Joint Locks* (DVD).

Questions to consider

- 1 What are some circumstances where you might use a joint lock on someone with whom you have a personal relationship?
- 2 What would be a circumstance in which using pain as a tool in self-defense could turn against you?

PREPARING FOR DEFENSE ON THE GROUND

LESSON 20

The game is different on the ground. Whatever you can withstand on your feet, cut that time in half on the ground. You will run out of energy, strength, and opportunity in half the time—and that's if you're in great physical condition. The upside is that people who do ground work exclusively have excellent cardio endurance. If you're a grappler, playing around on the ground is fun, and it's a fantastic workout. But don't let that convince you that a self-defense situation on the ground is ever a situation you want to be in. Your goal is to get up and out as soon as possible.

PLAYING ON THE GROUND

- ⦿ The ground defense conversation is a serious one—a dead serious one if you're not smart about it. And, like everything else in this course, the best way to get started on the ground is by playing with it.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, this playing starts with the traditional scarf hold and then how to transition it.



- ◉ If you have a body to play with, great. If not, you can run this solo (note that if you have a hard time visualizing the head and neck, you could grab a pillow and use it as a reference point). You can also watch the people in the video play; this will give you some ideas to apply later.
- ◉ For the person on the ground, if the pressure is just not there, let your partner know, but if the pressure is great and you can't breathe or are being authentically crushed, tap your partner hard and call "red." And be sure to switch roles with your partner so everyone gets to play.
- ◉ If you have the chance to be the meat puzzle, note when you have the opportunity to get the upper hand—moments when your partner broke contact or used the ground for support instead of using you. It is very important to be able to feel those little windows of opportunity so you can find ways to cheat and turn the situation to your advantage.
- ◉ In the video lesson, you will also learn how to get free and get to your feet from two other positions: the guard position and the mount position.



- ◉ If you're solo, work both guard positions, but with the mount, just work it from being on your back as if the threat is in the mount position. If you have a partner, take turns in the compromised guard position and find ways to disrupt your partner's strong position. If you're solo, watch what's happening as the people in the video play, noting what works and when they get stuck; then, later, go find a body and play with these positions.

- ⦿ The more comfortable you get playing on the ground, the more evident the paradox of ground work becomes: It's a fun way to play with the meat puzzle, but it can be uncomfortable.
- ⦿ One of the hidden gains from this kind of training and play is the gradual increase in your tolerance for close personal contact and discomfort. Discomfort is different than pain, and pain is different than being hurt, and getting hurt is different yet again than the injuries that result from taking damage.
- ⦿ The more physical discomfort becomes evidence of something fun, the more your natural resiliency as an apex-level predator becomes available as a resource. Resiliency is becoming a hot topic in the dialogue of what it means to be a strong and dynamic human being, and evidence is pointing to a singular conclusion: The more resilient you are, the more life feels like an adventure instead of something to just be endured. And that's a pretty cool side effect of your training.

The training drills in this lesson are priming drills for the self-defense work that comes next. These drills come from a range of martial arts—such as judo, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, and mixed martial arts (MMA)—and the skills give you something to work with and branch off of as you get into the more chaotic reality of violence.

If there's downtime between this lesson and the next one, come back to this lesson and practice the techniques a few times before moving on. You can also incorporate ground work directly into one-step by starting the game on the ground.

These skills help get people past the weirdness of wriggling around on other people's bodies on the ground and creates a mental framework for how the reality of our principles shift when we're on the ground.

When you're playing with these techniques, be thinking about how certain things change when you're on the ground, such as base-to-center-of-gravity balancing, targeting, power generation, etc.

And remember that as much fun as it is to play on the ground, you don't actually want to be down there in a self-defense situation.

Resources

Harari, *Sapiens*.

Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Sandberg and Grant, *Option B*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are potential monkey-brain barriers to putting your weight on the threat's body (instead of centering more of your weight on the ground)?
- 2 How will this show up when you are practicing and playing with a training partner, and how can you work past it?

THE GROUND PROBLEM FROM START TO FINISH

LESSON 21

Wrestlers, grapplers, and ground-based martial artists, such as Brazilian jiu-jitsu practitioners, are highly skilled where the ground is concerned. They become masters of their art and sport within the parameters that dictate their unique competitive arenas. Our practice and play starts out in the same place as these committed practitioners, but because our goals are different, we're playing from a different mind-set: Where ground arts focus on winning to a pin, self-defense focuses on surviving to your feet. This mind-set creates a healthy respect for the ground. And while you shouldn't fall in love with grappling for self-defense, you also shouldn't fear the ground.

FALLING TO THE GROUND

- ⦿ It's highly unlikely that you ended up on the ground because you looked at your threat and said, "Hey, let's turn this into a ground attack and I'll take the really horrible position and then you can have at it!"
- ⦿ On rare occasions you may be down on the ground minding your own business when the attack begins, but this is typically a transitioning event and you are going to the ground against your will.
- ⦿ Given our learning environment, safety dictates that we do this in a training approach. You'll need an area of wall that is clear of furniture and artwork as well as open space on the floor to practice what is called break falls—which, as the name suggests, involve breaking your fall.
- ⦿ Different martial arts systems take different approaches to these falls, so if you have prior training, yours could be different than the ones demonstrated in the video lesson, but all break falls generally work off the same principles.



The point of break falls is that most ground-based situations don't start on the ground.

- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will learn how to do controlled forward falls to the wall, from your knees, and from a standing position.
- ⦿ You will also learn another way to catch, or break, a forward fall—called a hard break fall in martial arts. This isn't something that you can safely be taught to practice at home in your living room unless you have a matted floor that you can work with. Until you get the structure right with a hard break fall, you can do more harm than good to your body.
- ⦿ A hard break fall is a valuable alternative if the momentum of the fall is going to be greater than what you can control with your own upper-body strength. If this is something that you want to learn how to do, this would be a good reason to seek out martial arts or self-defense training programs that have break falls in their system.
- ⦿ In the video lesson, you will also learn how to break a backward fall.
- ⦿ Good break falls can save you from serious injuries. And they're not just for self-defense: Miss a step as you're walking down stairs or hit a patch of ice on the sidewalk in the winter and these are going to come in handy.

GETTING TO YOUR FEET

- ⦿ The other end of the timeline is getting to your feet. You want to be able to get up in the safest and most efficient way possible, with the understanding that you may be injured, or at least frightened and disoriented.
- ⦿ The video lesson demonstrates a few different ways to get up from the ground. They're based on your body, your flexibility, your maneuverability, how frightened/injured you are, and what your goals are.

The video lesson ends by focusing on a few specific situations that let you work with the principles from this lesson. Remember that the principles are adaptable and that you can use all or part of them based on the circumstances you find yourself in.

While you're rolling around on the ground laughing and finding fun ways to apply the principles from this lesson, it's important to remember the reality of what you are training for. Hope for the best; train for the worst.

Resources

Sde-Or and Yanilov, *Krav Maga*.
Thalken, *Fight like a Physicist*.

Questions to consider

- 1 Based on your size, weight, and physical condition, what are your advantages and disadvantages in a ground-based situation?
- 2 Applying what you know about the power of monkey-brain protocols, what would it take for you to overcome a domestic violence situation (where your partner, who you love and isn't supposed to hurt you, is violent with you)?

WEAPONS IN SELF-DEFENSE

LESSON 22

When talking about weapons, most people focus on guns and knives because they are obvious symbols of lethal force. Not only do these weapons make the news, but they also get a lot of play in Hollywood. What's curious, though, is that the weapons that populate our imaginations require a significant amount of training to both wield and defend effectively. And if your self-defense training focuses exclusively on knives and guns, it's incomplete.

WEAPONS AND EVERYDAY CARRY

- ⦿ Improvised weapons are all over your home and office; you may even have a few on you now. Sometimes called weapons of convenience, improvised weapons can be part of your everyday carry (EDC), which represents what you habitually carry on your person or immediate belongings, such as a purse or backpack.
- ⦿ The laws governing weapons carry vary by jurisdiction and depending on whether the carry is considered open or concealed. If you choose to develop an EDC routine, be aware of the laws in your jurisdiction as well as the laws in jurisdictions you frequently travel in and out of. If you fly, be sure to check TSA guidelines as well.
- ⦿ EDC is a pretty broad-reaching category. For example, you can make a necklace out of a Kevlar cord and beads from an arts-and-crafts store that can be used as a flail. You can purchase a tactical pen, which can be used both as a sharp and a blunt force object.
- ⦿ Other items include keychain flashlights with DNA collectors, Kubotan keychains, and other keychains; a coin purse full of coins with a strong cord in case you need to swing it; and a roll of quarters, which adds weight and impact to a strike. Even a standard pen, your car keys, a tube of lipstick, and other items you have can be useful.



- ⦿ Think beyond EDC. Consider objects common to the larger environment. Various office and household items, kitchen utensils, knives, and even things like table lamps, candle holders, garden tools, and sporting equipment all have the potential to be weaponized.
- ⦿ And if you can use these items as weapons, so can someone else. If someone is committed enough to arm him- or herself against you, you are up against an escalating level of threat. Whether the escalation is a by-product of extreme emotion or premeditation, you are facing a threat who may be more comfortable with violence than you are and may have a particularly high commitment to creating significant injury. This reality is what brings many people into self-defense training centers and seminars.

- ⦿ The video lesson will show you a few defenses against a variety of weapons and how you could go about learning these or similar skills. The demonstrations will teach you a few key points but won't actually teach you these skills.
- ⦿ There's a lot of debate in the self-defense profession about whether weapons defenses should even be taught in an introductory course like this one—and for good reason. We are dealing with life-and-death-level decision making, and with stakes that high, an introduction isn't going to provide you with adequate training. In addition, there is nobody to monitor the mistakes you might be training into your actions—the ones you can't catch—which could have devastating consequences.
- ⦿ But even though this course isn't the right training environment for these skills, you should know that options exist for this level of threat. The video lesson will demonstrate a few of these skills and then give you some ideas on how you could go about learning to defend yourself against an armed attack. And even though weapons defenses look cool, remember that compliance always remains one of the options, unless compliance is going to make the situation worse.

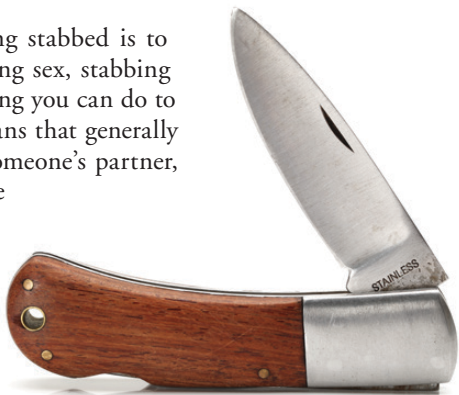
BLUNT FORCE OBJECTS

- ⦿ Blunt force objects, such as crow bars and baseball bats, can be used to swing at someone to cause damage. It's hard to conceal an object like a baseball bat. This means that you might get a little advanced warning. And you can use that to your advantage.
- ⦿ If someone is coming at you with a baseball bat, the first and best defense is to just leave. Get away as soon as you see that warning signal, because range becomes a distinct factor when the threat has something of length in his or her arms. Normally, the threat might be at a long range from you and you're out of harm's way, but not if he or she is holding a baseball bat.
- ⦿ But if leaving isn't an option, then you're stuck defending the attack. If the range is close enough that the threat can touch you, that doesn't necessarily mean that you can touch the threat because he or she has a built-in extension to his or her range that is not available to you. The video lesson demonstrates range issues associated with the threat wielding a long object.

- ⦿ Your goals are anchored in the elements of the golden move: Improve your position, make the threat's position worse, limit the damage you take, and cause the necessary damage to disengage safely.

OBJECTS USED TO STAB

- ⦿ Your best defense against getting stabbed is to live with integrity. Next to having sex, stabbing someone is the most intimate thing you can do to another human body, which means that generally it's personal. Don't sleep with someone's partner, don't betray people comfortable with violence, and don't trap a frightened human near the knife block on the kitchen counter. That's your best defense against getting stabbed.
- ⦿ Here's an exception: If the violence falls more on the asocial spectrum, the knife may be used to gain psychological control through intimidation. The video lesson demonstrates issues associated with the threat holding a knife when you're against a wall.
- ⦿ Don't let your monkey get you killed; your stuff isn't worth dying for. If this effort to intimidate is about resources, hand over your stuff. It can be replaced. You can't. If the threat is a warning—"If you ever come near my girlfriend again, I will slit your throat"—acknowledging the instructions is an option, and most of the time, following these instructions will work.
- ⦿ The one situation where the instructions are almost always a lie is when the threat is planning to abduct you and tells you to go with him or her and not scream and promises not to hurt you. There is an elevated risk associated with being moved to a secondary location.
- ⦿ People stab in many different ways. Largely how they stab is driven by the culture or subculture that they've come up in or is associated with how knives are used. In many social cultures in Western society, stabs come in



a straight, driving dynamic. Or they come in that same straight, driving dynamic up close and personal so that you can't see it coming—what is sometimes called a shank.

- ⦿ When the threat is close to you, your best option is to limit the possibility of getting stabbed—or, more likely, getting stabbed the second or third time. This is a bail dynamic. There is no reason to stay and try to take control of the threat because there is too much risk of damage to your person. The video lesson demonstrates why bailing is your best option.

GUN THREATS

- ⦿ If you are being shot at, it's not a threat. Law enforcement and tactical experts generally agree on the following recommendations:
 - Run in a zigzag pattern away from the threat. A moving target is much more difficult to hit than a static target, and a target moving in an unpredictable pattern is even more difficult to hit.
 - If you can't run to safety, find cover. Cover is getting behind an object that will stop a bullet. People often mistake something that simply hides them (called concealment) as cover. Learn the difference.
- ⦿ If it is a gun threat, you aren't being shot at—yet. And the video lesson demonstrates various ways to deal with having a gun pointed at you in a threatening way.

If you want to make defenses against any of the weapons from this lesson part of your go-to arsenal, then you need to find a qualified instructor in your area—someone who's teaching skills that are both reliable and valid, meaning that the skills he or she is teaching have been used in real encounters with some degree of success. It should also be someone who is comfortable with questions and understands that Always and Never are not gods to worship in self-defense instruction.

It also might be beneficial for you to learn how to use the weapons you are training against. Understanding how the weapon operates and how it may be used against you is invaluable information when that weapon is in somebody else's hands.

Many instructors of introductory self-defense courses are concerned that people will walk away from a weapons lesson with a false level of confidence. But many people come away from an introduction to weapons with a gravitas for what's at stake. And that makes you stronger.

Resources

Miller, *Force Decisions*.

Miller and Kane, *Scaling Force*.

Sde-Or and Yanilov, *Krav Maga*.

Van Horne and Riley, *Left of Bang*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What is the difference between concealment and cover? Look around your home, office, etc., and identify areas that provide one or the other. Here's a hint: If an object provides cover, it almost always provides an element of concealment (bulletproof glass might be one exception).
- 2 If you were going to look for a local instructor for weapons defense training, what are some of the qualifications you would look for?

PROTECTING YOUR VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE

LESSON 23

How do you handle a threat when people you care about are present? If you sense that you and your loved ones are in danger, one of your natural instincts is to become a human shield for your loved ones. There are a few ways to do that, and like everything else, it all depends on your situation, including the age, size, mobility, and mental state of your third party.

BECOMING A HUMAN SHIELD

- ⦿ If you want or need to become a shield for someone else, creating that position requires some practice. The following positions are demonstrated in the video lesson:



- If your third party is a close personal relationship, holding hands is one position you may be in naturally. In this position, it's not uncommon for the person who feels like the natural protector in the relationship to be holding the other person's hand in what is called the boyfriend grasp, which involves the hand of the "protector" to be over the other person's hand, with the palm and fingers facing down. In this dominant position, the protector has the capacity to fairly easily put him- or herself in front of the other person.
 - Another position involves the protector having his or her arm draped over the other person's shoulder. This position also gives the protector the opportunity to move in front of the other person.
 - If the protector is not attached to the other person but is beside him or her and wants to get in front of him or her in the case of a threat, the protector can move in front with a shielding action.
 - If the protector is behind, instead of beside, the other person when there is a concerning threat, the protector can use a swimming action to put him- or herself in front.
- ⦿ If you're working solo, you can work the actions using your imagination. Or, if you have a high-backed barstool, you can use the back of the chair as a substitute.
 - ⦿ Getting a partner for this lesson benefits more than just you. While there is always learning taking place for both you and your partner, protecting the people we hold dear is a valuable skill everyone benefits from learning. And you'll need to practice on a live person so you can feel the mechanics of how the body of the very important person (VIP) is going to respond.



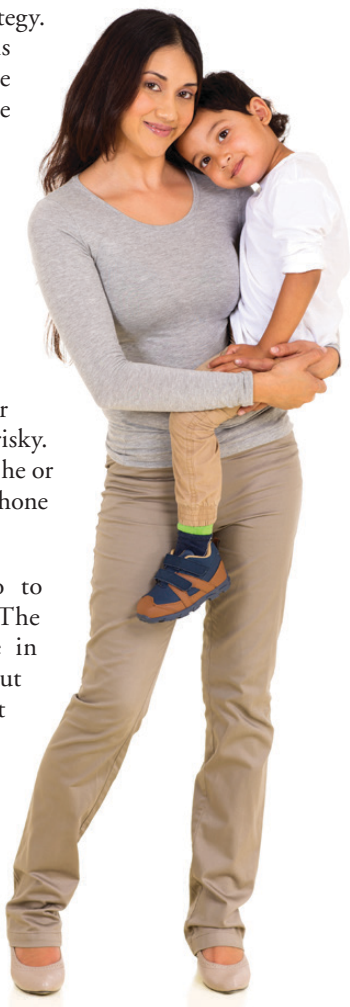
- ⦿ If you choose to act on the behalf of someone else's safety, you are standing as the person who is capable of taking and maintaining control in a situation where emotions are running high. In this role, you are the calm one—which means your VIP may not be.
- ⦿ If avoidance, escape, and evasion are our highest priorities and your VIP is getting enveloped in his or her own adrenaline stress cocktail, you may need to resort to physical communication to escort the VIP away from harm; then, you can verbally communicate that you two are leaving the situation and will talk about it once you get away. This is demonstrated in the video lesson.

INTERVENING FOR YOUR VIP

- ⦿ Intervening in a situation that is already escalating between your VIP and a threat is less straightforward than protecting your VIP from a situation you're also involved in. Your decisions and actions will be heavily influenced by the situation. Examples of potential situations that you might enter into are demonstrated in the video lesson.
- ⦿ From a legal perspective, there is a good chance that preclusion for your personal safety is present. You can just leave. This is where practicing articulation becomes essential in your skill set, because when preclusion exists, options for securing your safety without the use of force also exist.
- ⦿ Acting in a protective capacity, you will have a difficult time claiming self-defense and you'll need to be able to explain why your actions were truly necessary, unless your actions are governed by a sworn duty to protect.
- ⦿ To play with these skills, ideally you need two bodies. The reason is target confusion: Learners working this skill often hit the VIP instead of the threat. This is because when we start to adrenalize, we get a little stupid. So, having a VIP and a threat to play with helps you stay alert to the factors in this particular high-speed decision dynamic and train your monkey brain to let your human brain stay involved.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN

- ⦿ Another place in third-party protection that gets our monkey brains agitated is when we start adding children into the dynamic. If you are thinking about using these skills with your kids, you need to have a plan and you need to include your kids in that plan.
- ⦿ Prevention tactics are by far the best strategy. If you get separated from your kids in a large, crowded environment, one example of a prevention plan involves the following steps:
 - Place a business card or piece of paper with your cell number tucked in your child's pocket and make sure he or she knows which pocket it's been tucked into so that he or she can pull it out and say, "This is my mommy/daddy; I need you to call her/him." Relying on a frightened child's ability to remember your phone number, or your name, is risky. Even if your kid can recite all 50 states, he or she may not be able to remember your phone number when he or she is scared.
 - Help your kids choose who to go to for help as an extra layer of safety. The obvious examples, such as someone in a first responder uniform, are great, but a police officer or firefighter may not always be around. Another idea is to tell your children that if they are ever separated from you to find another mommy and tell her you need help. A three-year-old may not be able to identify a store clerk in a large public environment, but he or she does know what a "mommy" looks like—an adult female with children.



- ⦿ You also need a prevention plan for a higher level of threat than just getting separated from your children. When training your children in a plan with greater risk, you need to avoid saying things that will frighten them. The practice needs to be as much fun for them as possible. And give them only the basic information they need—nothing more.
- ⦿ The plan at this level needs to use specific key words that your child can understand as anchor points for action. This needs to be explained and practiced. Once your children have it down, depending on their ages, you'll need refresher sessions across time.
- ⦿ Here's an example of a safety plan that works well with many children (the key words are “threat” and “escape”):
 - “If mommy ever says ‘threat,’ you get behind me or daddy immediately without asking. And when you get behind me, you grab on to my shirt or jacket and hold on unless I tell you to do something else.”
 - “If daddy or I ever say ‘escape,’ you run. If we are in a house or a store, we want you to run for the door and get outside.”
 - “These two words are our family’s emergency code—like when you hear a police siren and mommy pulls over to get out of the way.”
- ⦿ Obviously, the “escape” directive to run outside changes if you are actually outside when you need this command. You’ll need to tailor your child’s key words and directives based on what your family is likely to need.
- ⦿ With one of the biggest fears facing parents of young children—abduction—prevention is key. But in the event that you are near your child when he or she is grabbed, there is an option, and it’s demonstrated in the video lesson.
- ⦿ Because an adult will outpace a child’s stride and your child may be resisting, there is a chance that the first person you reach will be your child. If you grab onto your child and pull, your child becomes the rope in a brutal game of tug-of-war. The video demonstrates an alternative to potentially creating injury or losing grip that involves using your child as a kind of ladder. It isn’t a hard skill, but it does require practice, because your monkey brain will resist using your child as a ladder.

- If you're solo, grab a chair to represent your child. If you are working with a partner, have your partner stand like a child.

This lesson can't cover all the potential variables you and your family may face. What's cool, though, is it doesn't necessarily need to. Throughout this course, your affordances have become broader and deeper and your ability to adapt has improved.

Think about your particular life circumstances and play with how you can apply the material in this lesson to the needs of you and your family. Get your crew involved, brainstorm, and play with the solutions.

As you do this, be mindful of the Hollywood effect: our tendency to get wrapped up in the "what if this happens" game and create movie-type scenarios that you'll probably never face.

Resources

Miller, *Facing Violence*.

Miller and Kane, *Scaling Force*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What are your personal mores about helping other people? Discuss situations in which you might feel compelled to help a stranger and the potential risks in that decision.
- 2 If you have children and they are older, such as 10 to 15 years old, what are some foreseeable complications in applying the VIP interventions from this lesson? For example, most 12-year-old boys are not going to let their parents hold their hands as they walk through a theme park. How would you adapt for this?

ADAPT YOUR SELF-DEFENSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

LESSON 24

This course has given you a foundation that many people just do not have—a foundation that is rooted in how much broader, deeper, and more flexible your affordances have become since the beginning of the course. You know that there's a difference between social and asocial violence, and you understand how incredibly patterned human behavior is, giving you a degree of skill to assess and predict. You know that your best self-defense is just not being there in the first place and that de-escalation fails when you forget you're probably the biggest monkey in the room. You understand that violence comes at a cost, even the violence required to defend yourself. And if you worshipped the gods of Always and Never when the course started, you've changed your religion. This mental flexibility is a dressed-up reflection of your natural primal ability to adapt—which has been woken up by this point in the course.

AMBUSHES FROM BEHIND

- ⦿ The video lesson demonstrates ambushes from behind, working in the context of things coming at you out of your periphery—which is a different type of violence with different goals than attacks you can see in front of you. Specifically, the lesson demonstrates bear hug attacks.
- ⦿ If you have a partner, play safe. If you're the attacker, don't be stupid and try to prove something. If you attack really hard and hold really tight, your partner is going to have to fight back as hard as you attack, and for him or her to be successful, he or she is going to have to hurt you. Don't set that up with each other. And be sure to switch back and forth with each rep.
- ⦿ A bunch of the principles and concepts from this course show up in the solutions of both partners in the video lesson for this exercise, including exploiting gravity and targeting. The victim of the attack is trying to

limit the damage he or she takes while causing the damage he or she needs to help improve his or her position and make the threat's worse. This may not always be pulled off in one move, but those objectives are behind all of the victim's actions. And if the situation goes from bad to worse, the victim can adjust.

- ⦿ The video lesson demonstrates several variations on ambushes from behind. Don't get crazy about trying to figure out what the "right" way to defend yourself is; just solve the problem, do what you need to do, and get away from the attacker.



ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING EXPERIENCES

- ⦿ This video lesson concludes with people playing in real-world environments as safely as possible—in both the weak position and the strong position. Working in both positions digs into the experiences of the person being targeted and the person doing the targeting. The lesson runs through a few different environmental training experiences.
- ⦿ At the end of the environmentals, participants in both the weak position and the strong position will review what they saw, did, felt, and experienced so that you can learn from them. Several environmental experiences will be unpacked in this after-action review, which is very important for helping you process the information from any training or real-life experience in a way that's useful to you.

- ⦿ In the after-action debrief, the participants stay out of self-judgements, such as “I did this wrong,” or “I should have done this.” The review is just about processing what actually happened and what the participants’ experiences were. Judgement doesn’t help here.
- ⦿ To be able to verbally articulate the physical experience of what you went through helps your brain process it. It’s also a sneaky way to enhance your articulation skills, which is a critical part of your self-defense tool kit.
- ⦿ Environmentals are a powerful way to take everything that is done in the clean training environment and push it out a little closer to the realities of violent encounters. If you want to play more deeply with environmentals, there are a few critical boxes to check for safety:
 - You’ll need three people: two to play and one to work as your safety officer.
 - Make sure you have a full-stop safe word, such as “red.” And remember to freeze in place, because even the untangling of the move could be where the danger lies.
 - Always debrief the experience after.
- ⦿ Everything in training and play is a learning experience, and the only useless training is the one where you gained nothing new. New skills, new insights, and personal aha moments—no matter how small—are huge wins.



There's a debate in the self-defense world about whether introductory self-defense courses like this one should be taught. There's a fear that introductory classes that don't require a long-term training commitment will create a false sense of confidence and put people in greater danger because they'll think they are ninjas.

While that argument is valid, some students who have been faced with real self-defense situations shortly after they start training or after a seminar have prevailed—not beautifully, or perfectly, but they went home.



If you want to deepen your self-defense skills, find a place to train. Make it a lifestyle—something you do because it makes your life better, not because you're afraid.

This course has offered you an introduction to self-defense. Even if you don't want to be a Krav Maga instructor, you can still deepen your skills and knowledge within the realm of self-defense. Revisit these lessons to practice, review, and play with the exercises.

If you played mostly solo throughout the course, go back through the physical stuff with a meat puzzle. You'll get a more realistic understanding of how to adapt to changing circumstances, and you'll be introducing someone else to potentially life-saving skills.

If you've had a partner to play with, see if you can enroll a new person—or many new persons—to work with. This will take your understanding of the principles to a new level.

Resources

Miller, *Principle-Based Instruction for Self-Defense (And Maybe Life)*.

Questions to consider

- 1 What did you find most difficult about the problems on the ground? Did you have trouble turning? Did you run out of energy? In an authentic self-defense situation, how do you think you could compensate (i.e., adapt)?
- 2 If there is a single concept or principle from this course you would choose to share with someone you care about, what would that be?
- 3 If there is a single physical skill from this course you would choose to share, what would that be?

KEY TRAINING EXERCISES AND CONCEPTS

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Dracula's cape: 7
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“O Bounce” in the OODA loop: 6
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Extended Warm-up with Adaptations

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threat display: 13, 14, 17

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triune brain theory: 13

trunk tips: 11

turtling: 9, 21

void: 11, 20, 21

warm-up (a.k.a. system check): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 16; see also video bonus:
Extended Warm-up with Adaptations

weapons defense: 22

weapons of convenience (a.k.a. improvised weapons): 11, 18, 22

BIBLIOGRAPHY

De Becker, Gavin. *The Gift of Fear and Other Survival Signals That Protect Us from Violence*. Dell Publishing, 1997.

De Becker is one of the high-profile authors in the self-defense and personal safety community. In this book, he recounts a series of cases reflecting both the victim's experience and the threat/aggressor's experience in personal violence. Because the case studies cover a broad spectrum of violent encounters, identifiable patterns emerge. These patterns highlight human behavior that increases the potential to be targeted for victimization. Particularly, de Becker provides detailed examples and descriptions reflecting the disparity between instinctual warning signals of potential danger and the deep social programming overriding the instinctive signals. Reviewing these cases provides the reader insight in how this gap may also be present in the reader's own worldview. Additionally, de Becker demystifies the tactics and strategies common to criminal behavior, particularly behaviors falling into predatory categories. Because these behavior patterns are defined by categories, such as "loan sharking" and "forced teaming," the reader is given language to what otherwise might feel unknowable and therefore potentially frightening.

Harari, Yuval Noah. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

A great in-depth review of how humans evolved through time and our development as a tribal species.

Hatsumi, Masaaki, and Benjamin Cole. *Words of Consequence: Understand? Good. Play!* Bushin Books LLC, 2002.

Years of training under Master Hatsumi provided Benjamin Cole with the rare opportunity to translate the deep wisdom of a master martial artist into a collection of thoughts, ideas, and reflections on everything from training to the metaconversation of how training impacts the personal transformation of the student. Although deeply traditional,

Hatsumi embodies the play and discovery models of human learning. This book is a collection of individual quotes, statements, and reflections on conversation. It provides a unique look into the mind-set of one of the masters and reinforces the human being's natural ability to solve problems and respond to changing information if the invitation (and instruction) is set up correctly.

Larkin, Tim. *When Violence Is the Answer: Learning How to Do What It Takes When Your Life Is at Stake*. Hatchet Book Group, 2017.

With a military operations and self-defense instructor background, Larkin writes to the lay reader addressing the realities of violence. Throughout, he provides stories of real self-defense situations and stories of encounters reflecting the immediate application of skills learned through self-defense training and seminars. He addresses concepts and goals for self-defense and attempts to demystify violence. Pointing out how distorted our current cultural orientation to violence has become, he addresses a core truth applicable to anyone interested in his or her own safety and security: If someone has become violent with you, the time for talking that person down has passed. Larkin uses his personal interpretations of asocial versus social behavior paradigms as they apply to violence and conflict, providing an additional perspective to the taxonomy addressed in Rory Miller's works. Throughout, the author addresses concepts of becoming a difficult target. He also discusses situations in which violence is not the answer.

MacYoung, Marc. *In the Name of Self-Defense: What It Costs, When It's Worth It*. Marc MacYoung, 2014.

This book is a culminating work authored by one of what the industry calls the grand old men of reality-based self-defense training. With an expanse of titles to his name, MacYoung's 2014 publication is in essence a brain dump. With more than 400 pages of content, this is not an evening's read. This book is a straightforward, if not periodically tongue-in-cheek, discussion of what is and is not self-defense and the deep costs of approaching conflict from bravado instead of intelligence. The author writes as he speaks. MacYoung is blunt, unconcerned about political correctness, and equally unconcerned as to whether his readers may be offended.

Although laced with moments of sarcasm and proverbial headshaking at the ridiculous behavior in which many humans are willing to engage, this is an essential read that provides a different approach to the material of this course.

McSweeney, Frances, and Eric Murphy. *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Operant and Classical Conditioning*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2014.

This handbook presents a survey of both operant and classical conditioning. It addresses a range of authors/researchers from the field across the scope of current behavioral psychology research and theory. This includes a look at basic concepts and applications of operant and classical conditioning, including behavioral economics. The book is applicable to professionals in the field as well as to academically minded individuals interested in the field of behavioral psychology. The handbook is particularly comprehensive and provides a solid discussion of the conditioning learning models on which specific drills in self-defense have been built.

Miller, Rory. *Conflict Communication: A New Paradigm for Conscious Communication*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2015.

A Social Change finalist for the 2015 USA Best Book Awards, this book strips away the professional jargon and provides an in-depth exploration of human communication as it reflects escalating conflict. Miller digs into the day-to-day patterns of conflict **experienced** at work, with friends and family, among strangers, and as precursors to violence and provides insight into predictable patterns. He examines the circumstances surrounding why your boss ignored a suggestion that could save millions of dollars, why you have the same argument again and again with your spouse, and why you become angry when someone insults you. Springboarding from psychological theory into current patterns of social contracting, this book addresses human communication through the subconscious and scripted patterns of interchange driven by three different aspects of the brain: the lizard brain (survival), the monkey brain (emotion/social status), and the human brain (reason). After reading this book, even if you reject the program's paradigm, the patterns of conflict escalation will no longer be invisible. This book will also provide you with a more in-depth discussion of the cornerstone material in this course.

———. *Facing Violence*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2011.

This book functions as a straightforward and concrete introduction to the context of self-defense and reflects much of this course's material. Miller identifies seven elements that should be considered when addressing self-defense training and unpacks each of these in detail. The material touches on legal and ethical implications of training and how this applies to decision making as well as how to break a freeze when ambushed and aspects of life following a violent encounter. The author also addresses the training and discussion of self-defense skills reaching beyond any physical techniques, delving into the critical nature of avoidance and de-escalation. In essence, the reader will gain insight into why avoidance and simply leaving a potentially dangerous situation are unquestionably the best-possible solutions to self-defense situations. This book provides the reader with additional tools for assessing a potential threat, and you will be presented with a slightly different discussion of the social/asocial distinction from Larkin's orientation. The differentiation between social and asocial behavior in this book is less black-and-white and highlights the complexity of human choice, social programming, and how to use specific training methodologies to overcome some of the instinctive responses humans may have when startled, frightened, and adrenalized.

———. *Force Decisions: A Citizen's Guide to Understanding How Police Determine Appropriate Use of Force*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2012.

This book serves as a self-paced and self-directed version of a citizen's police academy. Using his career in law enforcement as a backdrop, Miller provides readers with a step-by-step approach to understanding what it means to be a peace officer and how decisions are executed by law enforcement when force becomes necessary to protect individuals and communities. Through this lens, the reader gains insight into the complexity of assessing the ever-changing dynamic of interactions with a potentially hostile citizen, whether it reflects someone functioning as an active and armed threat or the unpredictable reality of intervening in domestic violence. Gaining a better understanding of the requirements of a law enforcement officer in executing his or her day-to-day responsibilities provides readers with a necessary knowledge base for managing his or her own behavior effectively when interacting with an officer. Defanging the mythology of who officers are and how they choose their actions, this work is a valuable bridge between peace officers and their communities.

———. *Joint Locks*. DVD. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2014.

A principle-based approach to teaching joint locks, this DVD is easy to follow at home with a partner. While traditional martial arts can have upward of a thousand named locks, the training material in this DVD makes application to self-defense simple. The teaching approach used is reflective of the introduction provided in this course. As a result, this DVD provides a continuing education specific to joint-lock applications for individuals wishing to explore this particular skill set more deeply.

———. *Meditations on Violence: A Comparison of Martial Arts Training and Real World Violence*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2008.

Miller's first work is a thoughtful and objective comparison between martial arts and real-world violence. As a lifelong martial artist and a corrections officer, Miller walks the reader through a thorough point-by-point analysis of how martial arts training applies to the realities of violence and self-defense. The reader is also given the opportunity to consider where and how martial arts skills do not readily transfer to self-defense situations. This book is a particularly valuable work for individuals with prior martial arts training. It addresses both the beauty of traditional training and how traditional systems were developed to be effective for specific types of violence during specific eras of human conflict and war. The book has proven to be a tipping point for martial artists who found themselves in violent encounters and discovered that their art had not adequately equipped them for the circumstances of modern violence. Reading Miller's seminal work creates a clear understanding of how and when your martial arts skills can provide value in self-defense and when it does not.

———. *Principle-Based Instruction for Self-Defense (And Maybe Life)*. Wyrd Goat Press LLC, 2017.

In this book, Miller delves deep into teaching methodology. This work offers the backdrop from which this course has been built. It focuses on how to develop good training and teaching methodology and how learning self-defense can be driven by the student's personal objectives. This is a unique and necessary book for anyone dealing with or training for high-risk, chaotic situations. It also has direct applications to life in general and has applicable information for both students and instructors.

———. *Training for Sudden Violence: 72 Practical Drills*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2016.

Participating in self-defense training means, at some level, continuing your learning process. Combined with the DVD *Drills: Training for Sudden Violence*, this book offers specific training drills you can work on with friends and training partners. The drills vary in complexity, and with each one there are details as to the value of the drill and safety precautions to consider. Working through all 24 lessons of this course, you will find several drills reiterated in this course. There are a few drills in this book/DVD requiring previous training before the drill can be conducted safely (without injury). Working on your own requires a conscious acknowledgment of your potential limitations, both in terms of personal skill level and environmental restrictions.

Miller, Rory, and Lawrence Kane. *Scaling Force*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2012.

Frequently, self-defense is seen in black-and-white terms. This resource offers a gradient by looking at the use of force across six levels. The levels begin with presence, the way in which you carry your body through space, and include touch, empty-hand restraint, and lethal force. Both authors have career-oriented experience employing a range of force based on the circumstances. This particular work breaks down the decision-making down (regarding use of force) into clear, distinct categories. Discussions on articulation, or the ability to speak about your decisions in behavioral versus emotional language; how to manage rate, tone, pitch, and volume for conflict management; and how to manipulate the emotional tenor of an interaction provide a scaffolding for managing potential violence at the lower end of the force continuum. There is also an important differentiation on the physical application of force distinguishing between lethal and less-than-lethal physical contact. Overall, this resource provides a comprehensive backdrop to several aspects of this course addressed at an introductory level.

Navarro, Joe. *What Every Body Is Saying*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.

Anchoring into consistent research about nonverbal communication and body language as dominant information in our interpersonal dynamics as humans, Navarro brings his background as a retired FBI profiler to the experience of reading body language. He anchors into

MacLean's triune brain theory from the early 1960s, and although much of McLean's theory has been disproven, Navarro's premise can still be useful by repurposing the theory as a model (as was done in Miller's *Conflict Communication*). Navarro specifically references this model in light of nonverbal communication and how much of this communication is below conscious awareness and common to humans as a whole. For a deeper understanding of how humans create a disconnect between what they may consciously choose to communicate through speaking and what the limbic system will respond to, this book is a good exploration into the material. The conscious, thinking aspect of the brain allows us to deliberately choose what we would like to say, and if that chosen discourse is dishonest, for most people there will be noticeable tells between the spoken language and what the body expresses. Navarro dissects this differentiation in anatomical chunks—face, torso, hands, etc.—giving the reader a primer for general tells of the deeper unconscious realities of the communicator.

Quinn, Petyon. *Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling: Dealing with the Sucker Puncher, Streetfighter, and Ambusher*. Paladin Press, 1990.

This is one of the earlier books discussing the realities of violence in light of how martial and combat artists train. Quinn offers specific physical skills with direct application to potential self-defense situations. These skills are simple and common to many training approaches. You will also discover insights regarding the experience of being hit. Demystifying the reality of violence, the author points out—for example—that most punches are not accurate enough to knock someone out, giving you time to recover and respond. Quinn reinforces the value of prevention skills and gives his insights on how to maintain awareness and read the environment as well as what dynamics are worth a second look. The author also provides easy-to-use tactics for managing both an escalating threat as well as the environment, which includes other people, to create the best-possible outcome should a situation escalate to a physical encounter.

Sandberg, Cheryl, and Adam Grant. *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.

Mind-set is a key factor in preparation for the possibility of violence and surviving a violent circumstance. And as many violent encounters are an escalation of conflict, developing an understanding of your own

responses to adversity can be a valuable asset. Sandberg is the dominant voice in this work, as she recounts her personal journey through the sudden death of her husband. She outlines her emotional and cognitive struggle with grief as it feels overwhelmingly insurmountable. Through this recounting, Sandberg and Grant draw comparisons to valuable and detrimental belief systems regarding adversity. Unpacking internal conversations and paradigms that help bolster the individual's capacity for working through personally devastating events, the authors provide simple and straightforward strategies. This book also offers a broad perspective of adversity against human nature and our social programs for managing difficult life events. In application to self-defense, the tools and strategies offered by the authors can be added to the survival toolbox for anyone facing high levels of conflict and/or the aftermath of a violent encounter.

Sapolsky, Robert. *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*. Penguin Press, 2017.

Conflict and violence can easily be relegated to atypical or aberrant behavior patterns, particularly when we consider conflict/violence in light of a disturbing event. Taking a biological orientation to human behavior helps minimize culturally associated emotional bias, and through this approach, Sapolsky offers a more scientific way to think about our behavior. This work considers behavior at the individual level using a Piagetian model of developmental stages and then backtracks into the genetic codes linked to aggression. Understanding the discomfort that can arise when genetics and aggression are considered in the same context, the author addresses both sides of this arena with a fair degree of neutrality. He also applies his premise on individual human behavior to the social levels and addresses an important theme that is present throughout this course: the natural tendency for humans to “other,” creating an us-against-them mentality.

Sde-Or, Imi, and Eyal Yanilov. *Krav Maga: How to Defend Yourself against an Armed Assault*. Dekel Publishing House, 2001.

The only book coauthored by the creator of Krav Maga and one of his early students turned colleague, this is a how-to guide. Written materials with photographic depictions of physical skills address the difficulties of effectively defending a threat against an armed assailant through the

Krav Maga martial arts system. Providing details on the mechanics of specific Krav Maga techniques, this resource is a good supporting tool to physical training under a qualified instructor. As with any written instruction of physical skills, the reader should not use this as a singular training resource but rather as a supplemental tool.

Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. Black and White Classics, 2014.

Sun Tzu is said to have been a military general and an adviser to the king of the southern Chinese state of Wu during the 6th century BCE. Although the authenticity of his authorship associated with this particular work draws a degree of scholarly disagreement, this book is one of world's most timeless treatises on military strategy. There are multiple translations of this noted work, and it is generally considered to be one of the fundamental texts on strategy and mindfulness in relation to conflict. As it reflects Chinese philosophy, there is reference to the context of how to live an honorable life. Related to self-defense, the ideas and philosophical musings can provoke personal evaluation. At the metalevel, no martial artist's or self-defense student's library should be considered complete without this book.

Thalken, Jason. *Fight like a Physicist: The Incredible Science behind Martial Arts*. YMAA Publication Center Inc., 2015.

The physical encounters in self-defense are mirrored on the training floor and mats across the spectrum of the martial and combat arts training community. What is not as often mirrored is the reality of the physical encounter (the fight) versus the mythos of historic arts and movie-driven fantasy. Thalken, a computational physicist with martial arts experience, brings science to the experience of fighting. If you want to understand how power generation and impact are defined mathematically or how to leverage the laws of physics to your advantage, this is a valuable addition to your martial/combat arts library. Thalken even addresses misnomers about protective gear and the reality of concussive impact. Even if you are not particularly fascinated by physics, you may find this book enlightening if you are looking for ways to fight smarter rather than harder.

Valdiserri, Anna. *Creepology: Self-Defense for Your Social Life*. Anna Valdiserri, 2017.

This self-published work is offered by a woman with extensive personal experience as a student in self-defense and as an individual who has encountered violence in her past. Self-defense training, particularly for women, often only addresses the risk of physical violence. This leaves unaddressed the daily minor boundary violations often encountered in personal and professional relationships for which a groin kick or knockout punch would be remarkably inappropriate. Applicable to both men and women, this book identifies common behaviors associated with intentional and unintentional boundary violations and low-level (nonphysical) self-defense circumstances. The author shares her insights, experiences, and strategies and offers the reader the opportunity to consider how these might apply personally.

Van Horne, Patrick, and Jason Riley. *Left of Bang*. Black Irish Entertainment LLC, 2014.

Although written as a reflection of the combat profiler training programs established for the military, this is an essential handbook for connecting dots between your gut and the circumstances around you. Like most things in the study of human behavior and human dynamics, nomenclature evolves from preexisting realities. Anchor points reflect our home bases in life, the places where we feel the safest and most protected. Proxemics describes human behavior as it relates to distance we hold between our body and someone else's body. Proxemic pulls gives us a way to talk about the reasons someone will draw near or create distance. The authors take combat profiling skills and break them down into distinct categories with application to the civilian world. This information creates explanations for why you look up at odd times to check your surroundings. It explains why someone walking past you may give you pause, while other people won't show up in your awareness at all. This is an essential book for deepening the awareness skills that will help you avoid dangerous situations, places, and people, thereby increasing your ability to avoid potential violence.

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